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I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

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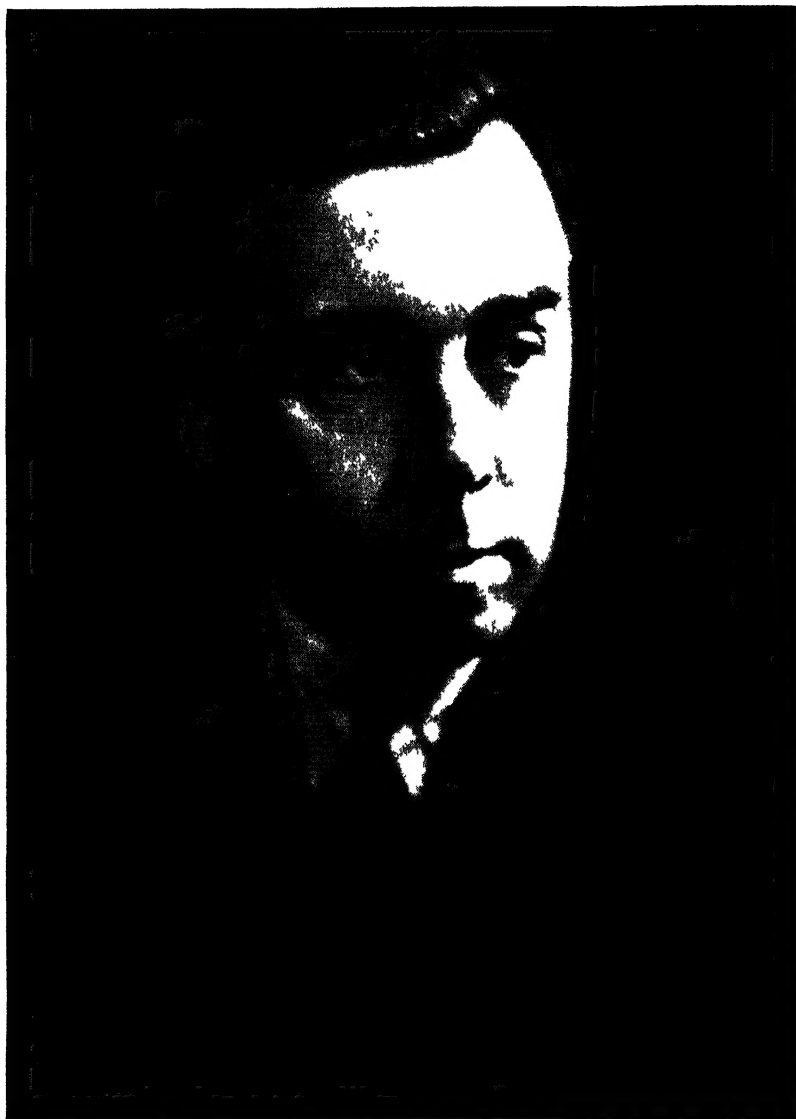
*Selected and Edited by
C. E. Eckersley, M.A.*

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

D. W. Clarke, M.A.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

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J. B. Priestley

I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

A Play in Three Acts

by
J. B. PRIESTLEY

I have been here before
But when or how I cannot tell:
I know the grass beyond the door,
The sweet keen smell,
The sighing sound, the lights around the shore.
—D. G. ROSSETTI



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Editor's Preface

*

THE Essential English Library is a series of books, some fiction, some non-fiction, intended mainly for foreign students, though it is hoped that English readers may also find them of interest. The fiction has been chosen from some of the best writers, old and new, of English novels, short stories and plays. The non-fiction consists of completely new books, specially written for this series, on various aspects of English life and institutions.

The books are meant for serious adult students, and, though the vocabulary is carefully controlled, the style is natural and vigorous, and there is no question of any childish "writing down." The vocabulary is fundamentally that of the four books of *Essential English*. But, to widen the students' knowledge of the language, the same principle has been adopted in this series as in the later books of *Essential English*. So a number of new words (averaging three or four to a page) occur in each volume, but every new word is given, with the phonetic transcription, in the Glossary at the end of the book, and each word in the Glossary is defined within the vocabulary of *Essential English*.

All the books are about the same length, and are illustrated with photographs or line drawings.

The general editor will welcome suggestions for additions to the series.

C. E. E.

Illustrations

*

Plates

| | |
|---|-----------------------|
| J. B. PRIESTLEY | <i>Frontispiece</i> |
| <i>Photograph by E.N.A.</i> | |
| A SCENE FROM ACT I | <i>Facing page 10</i> |
| <i>From Two Time Plays, by J. B. Priestley, Wm. Heinemann, Ltd.</i> | |
| A SCENE FROM ACT III | <i>Facing page 11</i> |
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Line Drawings

by Valerie Papineau

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| THE BLACK BULL, GRINDLE MOOR | <i>Page 8</i> |
| "I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE," A SYMBOLIC DRAWING | <i>Page 83</i> |

INTRODUCTION

FEW modern English writers are better known than J. B. Priestley, for not only has he won outstanding success as a novelist, an essayist and a playwright, he is also one of the most effective broadcasters living today, and few people who heard his voice, a steady, sturdy Yorkshire voice, in the dark days of 1940 will forget how his courage, his sound common sense and his warm sympathy then kept hope burning and made a sense of fellowship more real.

John Boynton Priestley is still a comparatively young man; he was born in 1894 at Bradford in Yorkshire, where his father was a schoolmaster. After taking his degree at Cambridge and serving in the first world war, Priestley wrote a number of attractive essays and some excellent criticism (*The English Comic Characters*, *Figures in Modern Literature*, *Meredith and Peacock* in the *English Men of Letters* series), but the general public hardly knew of him until the appearance of his novel *The Good Companions* in 1929. This had a tremendous success. After running through numerous editions it was made into a play and into a film. Here was a book in the grand romantic-realist tradition of Fielding, Smollett, Thackeray and Dickens. It holds much of the spirit of England—the love of the countryside, humour, sentiment, gaiety and a keen but kindly observation of ordinary men and women of all kinds. One character at least, Jess Oakroyd, the sturdy, independent little Yorkshireman who sets out from his native “Bruddersford” to find the romance of the “Great North Road,” has taken his place among the immortal characters in English fiction.

Priestley has never quite repeated the success of *The Good Companions*, though he has written some other first-rate novels—*Angel Pavement*, *Wonder Hero*, *They Walk in the City*—perhaps because his interest is less in the novel than in the drama. In his autobiographical *Midnight on the Desert* he tells us that as a youth he had been a passionate playgoer and had at one time

INTRODUCTION

thought of going on the stage, but other ambitions came, journalism, criticism and fiction; nevertheless, the fascination of the stage remained and now he has come back to it.

"I came to see that the Theatre, though much of its appeal may be childish, is an institution that cannot be safely despised even by the philosopher. It is indeed one of the few common meeting-places of the child and the wise adult."

His career as a dramatist began in 1932 with the production of *Dangerous Corner*, a most arresting play in which the characters take a certain line of action and the result is disaster and tragedy; then the stage darkens, the play begins again at the point where the "dangerous corner" was turned, but this time they take another line, and life continues on its normal course of safe make-believe. Already Priestley was experimenting with new techniques in the drama. But it was the reading of *A New Model of the Universe* by Ouspensky, the Russian mathematician and thinker, and J. W. Dunne's *Experiment with Time* that set Priestley's imagination to work on the fascinating theory of Time and its application to the drama. The result so far has been *I Have Been Here Before*, *Time and the Conways* and *Johnson over Jordan*.

Dunne in his account of Time suggests that Time is not, as we generally consider it, a single thing. We are living in more "times" than one, with our attention, or at least some portion of it, for ever moving backwards and forwards, as it can, across the fields of Time. The Past still exists and so does the Future, and we catch glimpses of this in our dreams. In fact we can do more, for the Future is not necessarily fixed.

Nor, said Ouspensky, is the Past. There can be "intervention" by some portion of our personality that can change the course of Past and Future. The finger of Time goes on writing the same thing over and over again—but it can be made to change a word or two.

Each person's Time is a personal thing, though our own particular Time may have some relation to the Time of other people, or the wider Time of our race or our world. But "there cannot be any of this Time for us outside the circle of it that we open at birth and close at death. The movement

INTRODUCTION

round and round this circle is Eternity. When a man dies, he immediately enters the same life from the other end, is born again in the same house, of the same parents, on the same day and year, and everything will happen as before. The only difference, he argues, is that there may be an inner development one way or the other. Some people, those comfortable creatures of custom we all know, live identically the same lives over and over again. Others, such as madmen, suicides, criminals, go through the same tragic performance with a dwindling inner life until at last there is nothing vital left in them. . . . A few learn to live, evolve properly and so finally, in some mysterious fashion, turn the circle into a spiral and escape."*

This is the theory that Priestley has used to such dramatic effect in *I Have Been Here Before*.

C. E. E.

* *Midnight on the Desert*, p. 276. (Heinemann.)

NOTE

ONE or two of the words and expressions in this play are in the Yorkshire dialect. To change these into Standard English would rob the play of something of its character, but as an aid to the foreign student, they are given here with their Standard English equivalents.

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| an' = and | it 'ud = it would |
| aught = anything | lad = boy |
| ay = yes | nay = no |
| by gow = by God | o' = of |
| champion = splendid, grand | poorly = unwell |
| chap = man | right upset = very much upset |
| 'cos = because | t'bar, t'morning, t'same, etc. |
| daft = foolish | = the bar, the morning, the |
| dale = valley | same, etc. |
| 'em = them | them chaps = those men |
| he's happen been = perhaps he | (I, we, you) wor = was, were |
| has been. | y'know = you know |

For some of Dr. Görtler's theories of Time and Recurrence, I gratefully acknowledge my debt to P. D. Ouspensky's astonishing book, *A New Model of the Universe*. It must be understood, however, that I accept full responsibility for the free use I have made of these borrowed ideas, and that it does not follow because I make use of them that I necessarily accept them

J. B. P.

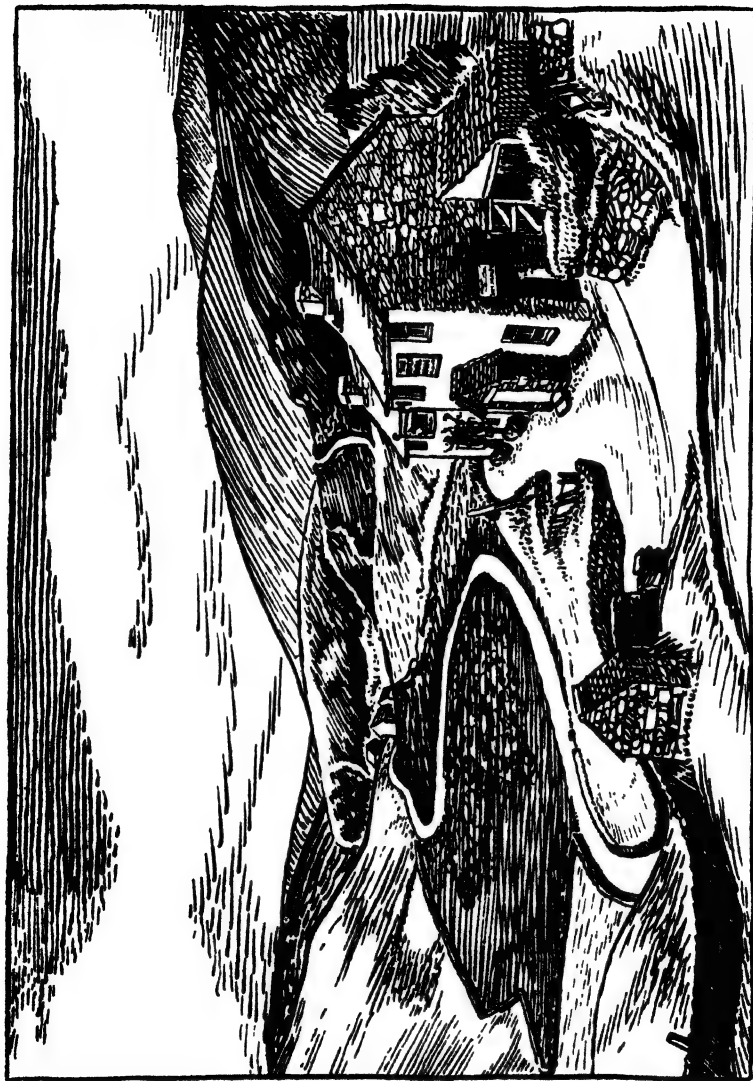
THE CHARACTERS

In the order of their appearance

SALLY PRATT
SAM SHIPLEY
DR. GÖRTLER
OLIVER FARRANT
JANET ORMUND
WALTER ORMUND

The SCENE throughout is the sitting-room of the Black Bull Inn, Grindle Moor, North Yorkshire, at Whitsuntide.

ACT^o I.—Friday.
ACT II.—Saturday.
ACT III.—Sunday.



THE BLACK BULL, GRINDLE MOOR.

ACT I

SCENE.—*The sitting-room of the Black Bull Inn, Grindle Moor, North Yorkshire, a moorland inn of the farmhouse type that serves as the local "pub" and also takes a few guests.*

The room is simply furnished in the style of a North Country farmhouse sitting-room. On the left is a long low window, deeply set, through which the sunlight is streaming. At the back, on the left, is a door that serves as an entrance to the inn to the people staying there, but not to people who merely go for a drink or a meal. On the right at the back is the door that leads to the dining-room, the bar and the rest of the inn, including two of the guest bedrooms. Through this door a passage can be seen. Down stage right is a slighter door, leading to two bedrooms; it opens directly on to a steep flight of stairs. Through the main door, when open, can be seen a distant glimpse of high moorland. The fireplace of the room is presumed to be in the fourth wall.

It is an evening in June, about eight o'clock.

The room is empty at the rise of the CURTAIN, and only the tick of the clock can be heard, but immediately afterwards SALLY PRATT enters, bringing in some flowers. She is a pleasant-looking country-woman in her middle thirties and is nicely dressed, but wears an apron as if she were still busy with household work. She speaks in a rather loud tone and with a North Country accent, but not too broad. After a moment or two, SAM SHIPLEY enters. He is a stout, humorous, contented Yorkshireman in his sixties. He is in his shirt-sleeves and is smoking a pipe. His accent is broader than his daughter's, but not very broad.

SALLY (*as she finishes her task*). That looks a bit better.

SAM. Ay.

SALLY (*sharply, but not unpleasantly*). Father—get your coat on.

SAM. What for?

SALLY. You know what for, I've told you often enough. Landlord o' the Black Bull in his shirt-sleeves like a barman!

SAM. As long as folk pay me what they owe me—they can take me for a barman if they like. I'm not a particular chap.

SALLY. Now go on. We'll have somebody here in a minute. I don't want Miss Holmes and her friends marching in, catching you in your shirt-sleeves.

SAM. If they never see worse than that, they'll be lucky. When's Mr. Farrant getting back?

SALLY. Any time. He only wanted some cold meat and salad and cheese left for his supper. I wish they were all as easy to please.

(SAM wanders out during this speech, leaving the door open behind him.
Then he pops his head back.)

SAM. Butcher's here.

SALLY. And he's rare and late.

(As she is going, there is the sound of a car. She hears it and shouts.)
Father, I believe there's somebody here. (She goes quickly to the window.)

SAM (off). I'm coming.

(SALLY hurries out. In the empty room we hear the clock ticking. A moment's pause. Then there is a quiet knocking on the outer door and it opens slowly. DR. GÖRTLER enters. The clock chimes the quarter past. He is a man about sixty, in well-worn darkish clothes of a foreign cut. He has a slight foreign accent, and speaks with precision. Although his appearance and manner suggest the quiet detached scholar, he has a good deal of assurance and authority. He looks about him with eager interest and curiosity, and when he has taken the room in, consults a small notebook, as if comparing its appearance with some notes there. Finally, he nods. SAM now returns, wearing his coat. The two men look at each other for a moment.)

Good evening, sir.

DR. GÖRTLER. Good evening. You are the landlord?

SAM. That's right. Sam Shipley.

DR. GÖRTLER. You let rooms to visitors?

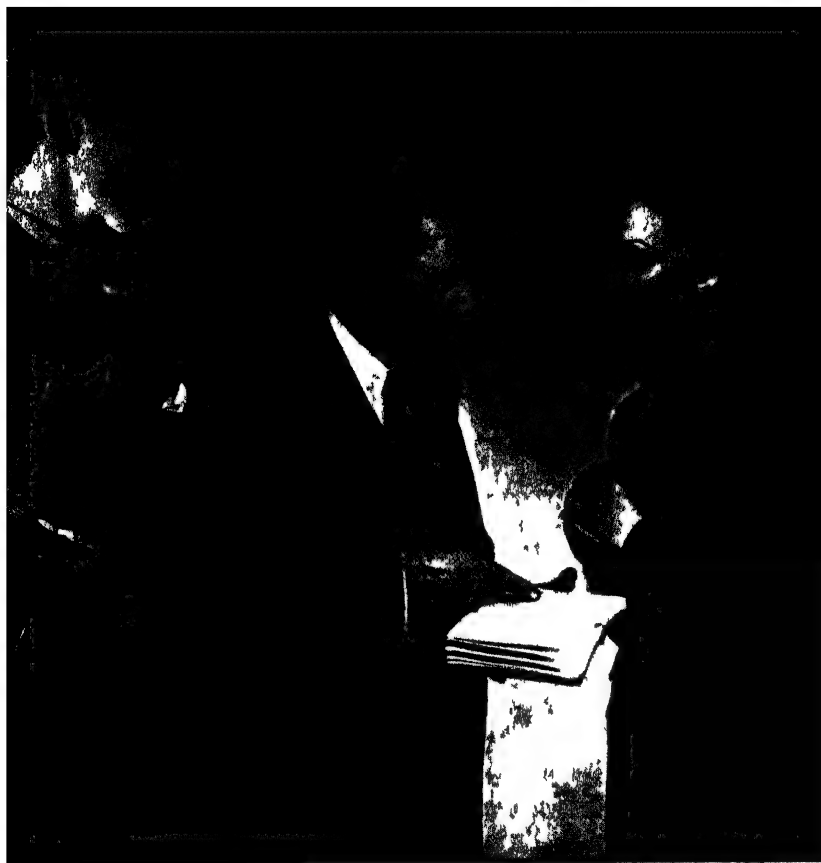
SAM. A few.

DR. GÖRTLER. Three or four, perhaps?

SAM (slightly surprised). Yes.



DR. GÖRTLER : *So I go about asking questions.*
(*Act I.*)



DR GORTLER: *I put down all the details here.* — *1st.*
(Act III.)

ACT I] I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

(SALLY *bustles in, then stops short in surprise when she sees DR. GÖRTLER.*)

SALLY. Oh!—good evening.

DR. GÖRTLER (*smiling*). Good evening.

SALLY. Were you wanting a room?

DR. GÖRTLER (*slowly*). I am not sure.

SALLY (*who does not like this*). Oh!—well, it doesn't matter, because I'm afraid we can't oblige you.

DR. GÖRTLER. You have no room?

SALLY. We've only four bedrooms, and they're all taken for this Whitsuntide. There's a gentleman in one already, and the other three are coming to-night.

DR. GÖRTLER. So. These three who are coming to-night—you know them?

SALLY (*surprised*). Yes.

DR. GÖRTLER (*gently, tentatively*). Two of them—perhaps—are married people—the man older than his wife—he might be rich—and then—perhaps—a younger man—?

SALLY (*who has listened to this with some surprise*). No. We're expecting three ladies.

DR. GÖRTLER (*rather taken aback*). Three ladies?

SALLY. Teachers from Manchester.

DR. GÖRTLER. Oh! Perhaps there is another inn here, eh?

SAM. Nay, this is the only one. There's the Lion at Dale End, but that's eight mile from here.

SALLY. But there's one or two here that lets rooms. You might try Lane Top Farm—Mrs. Fletcher—it's just a bit further on.

SAM. Not five minutes in a car—if you've come in a car.

DR. GÖRTLER (*still showing signs of disappointment*). Yes, I have a little car. I will try this farm, but I do not think it will be any use. (*Smiles rather forlornly.*) This must be the wrong year.

SAM. Don't you know what year your friends are coming?

DR. GÖRTLER (*with a slight smile*). They are not my friends. (*He goes to the door.*) How do I find this farm?

SAM (*following him*). When you get out o' the yard here, turn sharp to your right, and she has a sign up—you can't miss it.

(*By the time he has said this, DR. GÖRTLER is outside and SAM is at the door. There is the sound of a small car starting up. SAM closes the door and comes in.*

There'll be no rain this week-end. We'd have had a smell of it by now.

SALLY. Just fancy! Creeping in like that and asking questions!

SAM. What, that chap? Well, he's a foreigner o' some sort, you see.

SALLY. What's that got to do with it?

SAM. Well, perhaps it's the foreign style o' doing things. (*He begins to chuckle.*) Nay, what tickled me was him saying he must have come at the wrong year. Now that's as good as anything I've heard for some time. If he's going round asking for people—not friends of his, mind you—and he doesn't know where they are nor what year they'll be there—I reckon he's got his work cut out. I must tell that to some of 'em in the bar.

SALLY. You and your bar!

(*The telephone rings.*) Yes, this is the Black Bull. Yes, well, I am waiting. . . . Oh, Miss Holmes, yes—this is Mrs. Pratt—we were wondering what had become of you. . . . Oh dear dear! . . . Well, I never did! . . . No, if your friend's so poorly I don't suppose you could. . . . No, well it can't be helped. . . . Yes, we're sorry to . . . Oh, we'll manage to get somebody . . . that's right . . . good-bye. (*She puts down the telephone and turns to SAM.*) Miss Holmes—ringing up from Manchester—to say they can't come.

SAM. Nay!

SALLY. One of the other two's been suddenly taken poorly, and they don't like to leave her.

SAM. Oh!

SALLY (*indignantly*). And I should think it is "oh!" That's all three rooms going begging, at the very last minute, an' we could have let 'em four times over. Here we are—Friday night—Whit-Saturday to-morrow—an' now only one room taken. We ought to do what everybody else does, an' charge 'em a deposit when they book rooms in advance, and then if they do give back-word we're not clean out o' pocket.

ACT I] I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

SAM. Well, it's happened before.

SALLY. Does that make it any better?

SAM. Yes, 'cos we know we'll fill 'em up easy. Black Bull's never had rooms empty at Whitsuntide. There'll be some motorists coming. Ay, and perhaps some business chaps who'll spend more than those three women teachers. All they want is cups o' tea, and they'd never put their noses into the bar.

(OLIVER FARRANT enters. *He has been walking and wears a tweed jacket and flannel trousers, and is rather dusty. He is about twenty-eight to thirty, good-looking, with something of the boy left in him and something of the intellectual man. He has a decisive, slightly donnish manner, which shows itself least with these two, with whom he is on pleasant easy terms. He has more personal charm than would appear from his actual words, and though he suffers from the rather priggish conceit of the successful intellectual, there is more of this in the matter than in the manner of his talk.*)

FARRANT. Any sherry, left, Sam?

SAM. Yes, Mr. Farrant. (*He goes to get it.*)

SALLY (*who obviously likes him*). Your supper'll be ready when you are.

FARRANT. Good! (*Sitting down and relaxing.*) The last few miles were becoming a bit grim. (*Remembering, with whisper and slightly droll manner.*) Oh!—have the three females from Manchester arrived yet?

SALLY. No, they're not coming. One of 'em's poorly.

FARRANT. Well, I can't say I was looking forward to them—but I'm sorry. It's bad news for you, isn't it?

SALLY. It's a nuisance, but we'll fill up to-morrow all right. I only hope whoever we do have, you can get on with 'em, Mr. Farrant.

FARRANT. Now you're not going to suggest I'm hard to get on with?

SALLY (*earnestly*). No, I don't mean that, Mr. Farrant, but you know what it is. If we take people at the last minute, we can't be too particular, and when you've all got to sit in here together, it might be a bit awkward.

FARRANT. Oh, don't worry about me. I don't suppose I

shall be in much this week-end, anyhow, and if the worst comes to the worst, I can always go up to my room and read.

(SAM enters with a glass of sherry.)

SALLY. I'll see if you've everything you want in there. Do you like Wensleydale cheese, Mr. Farrant, 'cos I've got some?

FARRANT. I don't know. I'd like to try it.

(SALLY goes out.)

SAM. A bit o' nice Wensleydale takes some beating. Have a good walk, Mr. Farrant?

FARRANT. Yes, thanks, Sam. I must have done about sixteen miles. Down the dale, then across by the church, up the moor and back over Grindle Top.

SAM. Ay, that'll be all of sixteen mile. Did you find a bit of bog again at the Top?

FARRANT. No, I'm getting artful, Sam. I dodged it this time—worked well over to the right. The ordnance map's all wrong about Grindle Top. (*He sips his sherry, and talks easily.*) You know, Sam, there must have been three or four times as many people living in this dale two or three hundred years ago.

SAM. I've heard 'em say that.

FARRANT. Look at all those old ruins of byres and barns and sheep pounds—and the miles of old walls on the moor.

SAM. Ay, they built them before folk went into the towns. I remember my grandfather talking about that when I was a little lad.

FARRANT. Somebody ought to try and find the old records of these dales. Why, in the Middle Ages, what with all that old moorland farming life, and the abbeys and a castle or two, the whole place must have been humming with people.

SAM. I'll bet it wasn't humming with folk to-day.

FARRANT. Didn't see a soul this afternoon over the Top except a couple of shepherds.

(*He finishes his sherry and begins moving towards his bedroom. SAM takes the glass. The telephone rings. As SAM rather dubiously prepares to answer it, SALLY hurries in.*)

SAM. Yes, this is Black Bull. That's right. . . .

SALLY (*impatiently*). Here, I'll answer it, Father.

ACT I] I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

SAM (*into the telephone*). Hold on a minute.

(SALLY *takes it from him*.)

SALLY. Yes, who is it? . . . Yes—Mr. Ormund. . . . Well, it just happens we have two rooms because somebody's just given us back-word. . . . Yes, they're both ready, you can come up as soon as you like. Straight away? . . . Will you be wanting supper to-night? Oh, I see. . . . Well then, you turn to your left just outside Marlingset, and then straight up and you can't miss it. . . . That's right. (*She puts down the telephone and is rather excited*.) Now would you believe it?

SAM (*humorously*). I don't know till you tell me.

SALLY (*excitedly*). That's a Mr. and Mrs. Ormund. They rang up from Marlingset to see if they could stay over the week-end—they want a bedroom each—and they're coming straight away—they've just had their dinner at the White Hart—and d'you know what I think?

SAM. No, I don't.

SALLY. I believe this, Mr. Ormund is one o' them big Ormunds—y'know—Ormunds Limited.

SAM. Nay, he wouldn't come here if he was.

SALLY. How do *you* know? And he sounded as if he'd plenty o' money. Wanted two rooms and didn't ask price or anything. I'll bet you he's one of Ormunds Limited. Him and his wife—they'll be company for Mr. Farrant.

SAM. I told you we'd have them rooms let in no time. (*Pauses*.) I wonder if that foreign chap's fixed up at Lane End?

SALLY. He didn't even know whether he wanted to stay or not.

SAM (*casually*). No, but perhaps it would suit him here now. We have a married couple for him, if that's what he wants.

(FARRANT *returns, having changed his shoes and tidied himself*.)

You're having company to-night, Mr. Farrant.

(*He grins and goes out*.)

SALLY. There's a Mr. and Mrs. Ormund coming to-night, to stay the week-end.

FARRANT (*interested*). Ormund?

SALLY. Yes, an' I fancy it's one o' those big Ormunds—Ormunds Limited—manufacturers—I expect you've heard o' them?

FARRANT. I ought to. They put up most of the money for my school.

SALLY. Well, I'm sure this is one o' 'em.

(The noise of a small car is heard outside.)

FARRANT. Here already?

SALLY. No, they couldn't have come from Marlingset so soon.

(She moves towards the door, FARRANT watching idly. Before she can open it, DR. GÖRTLER enters slowly, carrying an old-fashioned bag. He looks at SALLY then sees FARRANT and appears to recognize him. SALLY looks at him, then at FARRANT, rather bewildered.)

DR. GÖRTLER *(to FARRANT, with some eagerness)*. You are staying here?

FARRANT. Yes. *(Pauses.)*

(DR. GÖRTLER carefully puts down his bag. There is something decisive in his manner.)

DR. GÖRTLER. I am Doctor Görtler.

FARRANT *(rather puzzled)*. My name's Farrant, Oliver Farrant.

DR. GÖRTLER. A schoolmaster, I think?

FARRANT. Yes, I'm head of Lamberton.

DR. GÖRTLER. I am now an exile from my own university—and my country, Germany—and I have been doing some little work for the University of London. *(He turns to SALLY.)* And still you have no room for me?

(SALLY gives FARRANT a quick questioning look. He nods reassuringly.)

SALLY. Well, as a matter of fact we have now, because those three ladies aren't coming and we've a room to spare——

DR. GÖRTLER. I should very much like to stay here.

SALLY *(businesslike)*. We charge twelve-and-six a day—all in. That's for this holiday time, and really we ought to charge more because we could easily get it—but——

DR. GÖRTLER *(simply)*. But you do not like to be greedy, eh?

SALLY *(rather taken aback)*. No.

ACT I] I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

DR. GÖRTLER. I will stay. The car will be all right there for a time, eh?

SALLY. Yes. My father can put it away.

DR. GÖRTLER. And my room?

SALLY. It's up there.

FARRANT. Next door to me. I'm just going to have some supper, Doctor Görtler. You'd better join me.

DR. GÖRTLER (*taking SALLY in too*). Thank you, yes. I should like something to eat. Anything.

SALLY. I'll see to it. My father can show you your room.

(*She hurries out.*)

FARRANT. It's a simple, unpretentious little place—but they're nice people—and I think you'll be comfortable.

DR. GÖRTLER. Thank you.

FARRANT. What's your subject? Science?

DR. GÖRTLER. It *was* physics and mathematics.

FARRANT. Not now? ●

DR. GÖRTLER (*with a slight shrug*). I still teach these subjects. But for myself—I go further——

FARRANT. Research, eh?

DR. GÖRTLER. You might say—exploring.

FARRANT (*with a smile*). I know. Spherical geometry. Two parallel lines meeting. Two angles of a triangle no longer greater than the third angle. Poor old Euclid turned upside down and inside out. I have a maths. master who talks like that—for his own amusement—not ours—— (*He pauses, then looks hard at DR. GÖRTLER.*) You know, I must have seen your photograph somewhere.

DR. GÖRTLER. No, I do not think so. I am not an Einstein.

FARRANT (*hesitantly*). I thought I—seemed—to recognize you.

DR. GÖRTLER (*calmly*). We often seem to recognize people—and places.

FARRANT. I don't.

DR. GÖRTLER. You have been ill?

FARRANT. I was ordered a short rest. (*He pauses, then resumes, rather hastily.*) They say that it's when you're nervously exhausted that the two halves of your brain don't synchronize.

Then they play that recognition trick on you. Isn't that the explanation?

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes. But do not believe it. We are not as simple as bicycles.

(SAM enters.)

SAM. Supper's ready, Mr. Farrant.

(FARRANT moves up and SAM holds the door open for him.)

FARRANT (to DR. GÖRTLER as he goes). You'll join me in the dining-room, eh?

(He goes.)

SAM (heartily). Now then, sir, you're here, after all. And you'd like to see your room?

DR. GÖRTLER. Please.

(SAM goes across for DR. GÖRTLER's bag, talking as he moves.)

SAM. Ay, not five minutes after you'd gone, those three ladies rang up to say they couldn't come, so we'd room after all for you. Just the one left.

DR. GÖRTLER. But the other two rooms?

SAM. Oh—we got rid o' them all right. There's a Mr. and Mrs. Ormund coming to-night into them.

DR. GÖRTLER (triumphantly, with a touch of wonder, really to himself). So! So! *Ich bin glücklich.*

SAM (opening the door). What language is that, sir? German?

DR. GÖRTLER (off). Yes. It means "I am fortunate."

(They go out and their voices die away. The stage is empty. The light has been fading slowly, but there is a last glow in it. There is a pause of a moment or two, then DR. GÖRTLER and SAM return.)

You say that because you have been happy here?

SAM. Yes, I can't grumble at all. I've never made much out o' this place, but I've had all I want. I'd ask for nothing better—if I had my time over again.

DR. GÖRTLER (turning—interested). Do you often say that?

SAM. Say what?

DR. GÖRTLER (slowly). If you had your time over again.

SAM (surprised). Well—no—not specially. I mean to say—it's just a way—like—o' putting it. Everybody says it.

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(SALLY enters, holding the door open behind her.)

SALLY (*not very cordially*). Your supper's ready, Doctor—
er——

DR. GÖRTLER. Thank you.

(*Turning, rather mischievously, to SAM.*) My friend—perhaps you will have your time over again.

SALLY (*at the door*). In here, that's right. And if you don't find everything you want, just ring the bell. (*She watches him go, then comes in, closing the door behind her.*) If four of 'em's going to sit in here, it wants changing round a bit.

(SALLY is now busy, with some small assistance from SAM, slightly rearranging the furniture of the room, and finally switching on the lights and drawing the curtains.)

What was that Doctor Görtler talking about?

SAM. Nay, I just happened to say "If I'd my time over again"—you know how you do?—and he seemed right taken up with it. (*Repeating it speculatively.*) "If I'd my time over again." Nay, it's a common enough saying.

SALLY (*in a slow, grumbling tone, as she moves about*). Yes, it's common enough. An' it's silly enough an' all. A lot of use it is you or anybody else saying what they'd do if they had their time over again. A fat chance they have, haven't they? Time moves on and it takes you with it, whatever you say—as I know only too well.

SAM. Ay. Though it's only same for you as for anybody else, lass.

SALLY. Well, I'm not so sure about that.

SAM. We all go on getting older, Sally.

SALLY. I didn't mean just that. Y'know, Father, it's only four years since Bob and I were staying here with you over Whitsun. And Charlie was still a little lad. The three of us here . . . laughing and talking and going on day long . . . and nothing to tell us it was nearly all over. . . .

SAM (*disturbed and affectionate*). Ay—I know—lass—but don't think about it.

SALLY. It's not so long since, but time's run on. . . . It's taken Bob from me . . . even Charlie's growing up and doesn't

need me like he used to. . . . I almost might be an old woman wondering where they're going to bury me. . . .

SAM. Now then, Sally lass, it's not so bad as it might be.

SALLY. I might have thirty years to live yet—and I'd swop the lot for just that week we had here, four years ago. . . . But what's the use?

SAM. Ay—but give it a chance. You'll forget.

SALLY. I know I'll forget. I'm forgetting now. I can't hear Bob's voice as plain as I could a year or two since. It's taking even that from me now. . . . That's what time does to you . . . and if it's God's idea, He'll get no thanks from me. . . . *(She looks critically at the room.)* Well, I don't think I can do any better with it as it is. I've sometimes had an idea we might do better to bring the big table in and make this the dining-room—I mean, just for people who's staying here. But it's too far from the kitchen.

(She is silent a moment, and then is heard the horn of a very large car.) It'll be Mr. and Mrs. Ormund. Here, I must nip upstairs and see if their rooms look all right. Go and see to their luggage.

(She hurries out. SAM goes to the outer door, leaving it open as he goes through. Voices are heard outside. A pause. Then JANET ORMUND enters slowly. She is an attractive, sensitive woman about twenty-eight, and is dressed for the country in a simple but expensive style. She enters the room with a slow indifference, then suddenly stiffens, frowns, looks incredulous, then examines it eagerly, without much movement. It is clear that there is some recognition, mixed with incredulity. A sudden uprush of emotion makes her feel almost faint, and she sinks into the chair above the table, exhausted, breathing heavily.)

Her husband, WALTER ORMUND, enters. He is a biggish man in his early forties, whose manner alternates between alert, sharp command, on the one hand, and a gloomy brooding, on the other. He is dressed in quiet tweeds, the kind a man might wear at an office before leaving for the country. He carries a much-used dispatch-case. He has no eyes for the room, only for his wife.)

ORMUND. What's the matter, Janet?

JANET. I felt rather faint.

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(*She takes charge of herself. He would like to help but doesn't know how, so remains large and helpless. She looks about her, then at him.*)

ORMUND. Probably tired.

JANET. No. . . . I'm not . . . really. (*She looks about her again, then at him.*) I had—a sort of feeling—this room—(*She gives it up.*)

ORMUND. We needn't stay here, y'know.

JANET. No.

ORMUND. We can push on. There's plenty of time.

JANET. Yes, of course we can.

ORMUND. I can simply say "Sorry, not our kind of place," give them something for their trouble, and off we go.

JANET. Quite simple. And—I think—rather comforting.

ORMUND (*with touch of burlesque*). You mean—one of us hasn't been taken ill—the car hasn't suddenly and mysteriously broken down—there isn't a fog or a flood or a landslide—none of those sinister compulsory things—?

JANET (*with a smile*). No, not one. (*Then with sudden seriousness.*) We're quite free. We can choose. We're not being compelled.

ORMUND. Not in the least. We can go now. Just say the word.

JANET. Why don't you say it?

ORMUND (*marching to the door*). All right. I'll say it. Let's go.

JANET (*hesitating, then with a slight laugh*). No. We'll stay.

ORMUND (*with a touch of bitterness*). Anything for a change, eh?

JANET. Walter—is that one of the remarks you promised not to make?

ORMUND (*rueful*). Oh—I hope not.

JANET. It sounded like the beginning of one. Remember—you promised. Play fair.

ORMUND (*who would like to play fair*). I'm trying, Janet. I'm trying hard. Only—I do seem to be in the one situation in the world where it's impossible for a man to be fair. You've no idea what a devil of job it is.

JANET. I know, Walter.

ORMUND (*not sharply*). You don't.

JANET (*rather sadly*). No—that's the trouble, I suppose—I

don't. (*Looking at him with a touch of wistfulness and pity.*) But—just to be easy and friendly—for once, no arguments, no reproaches—that'll be something, won't it?

ORMUND. Yes, it'll be—something.

JANET (*half-laughing, half-vexed*). Oh—Walter! The very way you said that—!

ORMUND. No, no, I didn't mean it that way. I'm really doing my best. You're right. God knows you're right. It'll be something.

JANET. I'll do my very best.

ORMUND. And I'll do better still. You'll see. Nice. Easy. Friendly. All according to plan.

(*He looks about him, whistling softly. She looks at him, and he breaks off and gives her a careful reassuring smile. She returns it, but nevertheless looks troubled. SALLY enters, with an obvious sense of the importance of the occasion.*)

SALLY (*rather breathless*). Good evening. Mr. and Mrs. Ormund, isn't it?

JANET. Yes.

SALLY. You did say you wanted both rooms, didn't you?

ORMUND (*humorously*). Yes. I have to have a room to myself because sometimes I waken up in the middle of the night and begin scribbling figures on bits of paper—and then—I have to smoke. Yes, smoke. Are you insured against fire?

SALLY. Yes, we are that.

ORMUND. It's all right, then. I shall smoke a lot—and burn holes in your best sheets.

SALLY (*entering into this*). I'll make you pay for 'em if you do, Mr. Ormund. (*To both of them.*) I expect you'd like to see your rooms, wouldn't you?

ORMUND. You have a look at 'em, Janet. I must telephone to Sykes.

(*JANET rises and goes out with SALLY. ORMUND telephones.*)
Trunks. . . . Is that Trunks? . . . This is Grindle five. I want Brensham six-seven. . . . Yes, Brensham six-seven. . . . All right. . . .

(*He waits, telephone to ear. SAM enters.*)

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SAM. Your bags are upstairs, sir, and the car's in the garage.

ORMUND. Thanks. Bring me a large whisky-and-soda, will you? MacFarlane's Old Liqueur, if you've got it.

(SAM goes out.)

(Telephoning.) Hello, Brensham? Oh—that you, Sykes? Walter Ormund here. We're fixed up in a little pub on the moors—the Black Bull, Grindle Moor. 'Phone number's Grindle five. . . . Yes, get me here any time—shan't be going far. . . . Yes, well, you work out the marketing costs, and I'll do the rest. . . . I've got all the information here, including Orgenbaum's report. . . . Who? Pensfield? . . . No, he won't make any trouble. I'll offer him a seat on the board. That'll keep him quiet. . . . Not he! I know too much about him. . . .

(SAM comes in with a large whisky-and-soda, and as he is passing, ORMUND reaches out and takes the whisky, to SAM's surprise, and has a long drink while still listening. SAM gives him a droll look and goes out.)

Yes. . . nothing in that, Sylms. . . . Add two and half per cent. to the overhead, then. . . . I'll ring you up before Monday morning. . . . Well, work all night then—put a wet towel round your head and a bottle of whisky on your desk. . . . Nonsense! Holidays are for boys and girls, not men. . . . I know all about your children, but they can get on without you. . . . All right. I'm depending on you. 'Bye.

(He puts down the telephone, takes his drink to the table, and pulling an old envelope out of his pocket, makes a few quick notes on it. Then he looks at what he has written, so absorbed that he does not notice the entrance of JANET, who comes in quietly. She watches him take an absent-minded pull at his drink.)

JANET. You know, Walter, you'd several whiskies at that place where we had dinner.

ORMUND. I know. And I'd several before that. And now I'm having another. And what I say is this. If the only way I can find dividends for several hundred shareholders and wages for several thousands of employees is by drinking several whiskies, then I must drink several whiskies.

JANET. But you're not going to do any work this week-end?

ORMUND (*now sitting with his notes*). I must. I've just been telephoning Sykes. We've a whole big scheme to work out before Wednesday.

JANET. This isn't going to be much of a change for you, is it? More work—more whisky.

ORMUND. A change is too much to hope for. Let me just keep ticking over—just ticking over—that'll do.

JANET (*at once sorry and protesting*). I can't blame you for being bitter, Walter, but it isn't going to help us.

ORMUND (*sincerely*). Bitter! I'm not being bitter, my dear, not in the least. (*He takes a good drink.*)

JANET (*getting a whiff, perhaps, as she passes behind him*). Loathsome stuff! I can't think how you go on and on drinking it.

ORMUND. There's a good reason why the distilleries are working at full blast. They're busy giving us Old Highland Blended Courage by the case. Faith and Hope at twelve-and-six a bottle. Love seven years in bond.

JANET. And in another minute, Walter, you'll be attacking me again.

ORMUND. No, no, I'm not attacking you, I'm defending whisky. It's dependable. It doesn't change its mind, think it's in love with you and then know better. It may have a little more fusel oil in it this year than last, but that's all the difference. That's why people all over the world now are steadily pickling themselves in it.

JANET. If it made you silly-drunk, I don't think I'd object.

ORMUND. My dear Janet, you'd walk straight out on me.

JANET. No. The trouble is, it only makes you gloomy.

ORMUND. No, if I pour enough down into the darkness inside, they begin to floodlight things down there. Beautiful images begin to shine. Venuses rise from the sea of Scotch-and-soda—glorious, smiling, kind wenches, all looking rather alike— (*He breaks off suddenly.*) Rooms all right?

JANET (*grateful for this*). Yes. Queer little windows and a heavenly country smell.

ORMUND. Any spotted china beasts?

JANET. Yes. Dogs with long necks. They've blue spots in my room, red spots in yours.

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ORMUND. Good! I haven't seen any of those beasts for years and I'm fond of 'em.

JANET (*hopefully*). I believe you're going to like it here.

ORMUND (*with sudden change of mood*). No. (*He finishes his drink.*) I can't help feeling it was a mistake coming here.

JANET (*mildly*). It was your idea.

ORMUND. A lot of my ideas are bad. This is too small, too quiet. It throws us straight back on to ourselves——

JANET. That's a good thing.

ORMUND. It's a good thing when people are all right with one another. But when they're trying to be easy and friendly and one of 'em has died on the other, as if he were last year's worst hat—then if they've any sense they want to go and stay at some large damn silly place screaming with jazz bands where you can't possibly think. Here you can't help thinking. I've started already. . . .

(*FARRANT enters. He stops short, and he and JANET look at each other. Then ORMUND looks too, and the clock joins in with its tick and chime, as if it had been expecting this. An odd tenseness for a moment.*)

FARRANT (*with a certain effort*). We'd better introduce ourselves. My name's Farrant.

ORMUND (*his bewilderment over*). That's it, of course. You're Oliver Farrant, Head of Lamberton. I'm Walter Ormund. My wife.

FARRANT. I didn't expect to meet one of the school governors here.

ORMUND (*not importantly*). I've been too busy to go and see the school yet, but I was one of the governors who put you in there. Thought we ought to have a young man.

FARRANT (*smiling*). You were quite right.

ORMUND. But what are you doing here? Term time, isn't it?

FARRANT. I was told to knock off and have a rest.

ORMUND. Overworking?

FARRANT. That's what they said. I feel rather a fraud—I'm walking miles and miles every day, and eating like a horse——

ORMUND (*looking hard at him*). Look a bit nervous, though.

JANET. How did you find your way up here?

FARRANT. Mrs. Pratt—that's the landlord's daughter—has a boy, Charlie, who's at Lamberton. He told me about it.

JANET. Mrs. Pratt was telling me all about her boy. Is he clever?

FARRANT (*not at his best*). Yes, he's got brains. He's the kind of boy who makes me feel glad I'm a schoolmaster. Ought to be fairly certain of an Oxford scholarship later on. We've a good many boys of his kind.

JANET. Do you mean—clever ones or from this sort of home?

FARRANT (*rather deliberately*). I mean—boys with brains from this class. A lot of them have brains, y'know.

JANET (*who does not like his manner*). Yes, it never occurred to me that they wouldn't have.

FARRANT. And it's part of our policy at Lamberton to encourage them.

ORMUND (*dryly*). Yes, it was part of *our* policy when we built the school.

FARRANT. Sorry, I was forgetting.

ORMUND. That's all right. Have a drink?

FARRANT. No, thanks. Too soon after supper.

ORMUND. There's a bar in there, isn't there?

FARRANT. Yes. But the talk's not very amusing.

ORMUND (*almost giving him up as a bad job*). Anybody else staying here?

FARRANT. Yes, a Doctor Görtler.

ORMUND. German?

FARRANT. Yes, Professor of mathematics taking refuge over here. Judging by his talk at supper, he seems to have wandered a long way from mathematics now. I don't quite make him out.

JANET. Why?

FARRANT. Oh—he seems to be turning mystical. Probably seen too much trouble. The German intellect doesn't always stand the strain. (*After a pause.*) I'll be down later, if you want to talk about the school.

(*He nods and goes out, closing the door behind him. ORMUND and JANET look at each other.*)

ORMUND (*quietly*). Without having seen him, purely on his

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record—and against considerable opposition, I had that young gentleman appointed Head of Lamberton.

JANET (*rather grimly*). My dear, I know you did.

ORMUND. Well?

JANET (*with irony*). Oh—very nice, friendly, modest sort of young man—not the least little bit conceited and dogmatic—very charming—humph! (*She laughs.*)

ORMUND. Yes, most extraordinary thing. Thought I'd take to him. Took to him at once on paper. And he *looks* all right. Ought, in fact, to be a very attractive fellow. But—well—there you are——

(*He has now risen and turns to the door leading to the dining-room and bar. This brings him face to face with DR. GÖRTLER, who has just entered. DR. GÖRTLER looks curiously at the ORMUNDS, especially at JANET, and is then ceremonious.*)

DR. GÖRTLER (*with a little bow*). Doctor Görtler. Mr. and Mrs. Ormund?

ORMUND. Yes, good evening.

JANET. Good evening.

DR. GÖRTLER (*politely*). And a very beautiful evening.

JANET. Yes, hasn't it been?

ORMUND. Would you like to join me in a drink?

DR. GÖRTLER. No, thank you.

ORMUND. Janet?

JANET. No, thank you, Walter.

ORMUND (*gravely*). Then—I think—I shall try the bar. (*As JANET makes a murmur of protest—"Oh, Walter!"*) No, no. Shan't be long.

(*He goes out. DR. GÖRTLER settles down and looks in a friendly but very deliberate fashion at JANET, who smiles in return.*)

JANET. Have you been up here before, Doctor Görtler?

DR. GÖRTLER (*watching her*). No. Have you?

JANET (*frowning a little*). No—I haven't—really.

DR. GÖRTLER (*with a slight smile*). You do not seem very certain.

JANET (*slowly*). I've been wondering——

DR. GÖRTLER (*as she hesitates*). Yes?

JANET (*rather quickly*). I was only wondering if I could have been here when I was a very small child.

(*She breaks off, and looks at him, and then away from him. There is a pause.*)

DR. GÖRTLER. Mrs. Ormund, I am a student—a very old one now. Sometimes we students do not seem to have very good manners. I do not wish you to think I am—inquisitive, impertinent.

JANET (*with a slight smile*). It didn't occur to me that you were—or might be.

DR. GÖRTLER. Lately I have been enlarging my studies—to include the human mind. So I go about asking questions.

JANET. If this means you want to ask me some questions, you can. But I don't think you'd find me much use. I've always thought the psycho-analysts monstrously exaggerated everything. I can't believe that all the little fears and fancies one has are of any real interest or value.

DR. GÖRTLER. Even a few years ago, I would have agreed with you. But now I see that we do not understand ourselves, the nature of our lives. What seems to happen continually just outside the edge of our attention—the little fears and fancies, as you call them—may be all-important because they belong to a profounder reality, like the vague sounds of the city outside that we hear sometimes inside a theatre.

JANET (*startled*). Oh! (*She stares at him, almost terrified.*)

DR. GÖRTLER. What is it?

JANET (*hesitantly and with wonder*). You see . . . suddenly I felt . . . I could have sworn . . . you'd said all that to me before. . . . You and I—sitting, talking, like this . . . and then you said "because they belong . . . to a profounder reality . . . like the sounds of the city . . . we hear sometimes inside a theatre. . . ." (*She dismisses the mood—then hastily.*) I'm so sorry. I must be tired.

DR. GÖRTLER. Mrs. Ormund, what made you come here?

JANET. Oh—pure chance. We wanted to spend this week-end somewhere in the country. A man at the hotel we dined at—to-night—not an hour ago—suggested this place. I'd never heard of it before.

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DR. GÖRTLER. It was all quite dull, ordinary?

JANET. Yes . . . until we were driving from Marlingset up here. . . .

DR. GÖRTLER (*as she hesitates*). Yes?

JANET. I find this—rather difficult— (*She breaks off, and then, with urgency.*) Quite suddenly, I began to feel excited. . . . About nothing, it seemed. . . . My heart was beating terribly. . . . We stopped once . . . only a moment, to make sure about the way. . . . At the roadside there were some white harebells . . . just some white harebells. . . . Of course they looked lovely there . . . white and fragile and perfect, at the edge of the great dark moor. . . . It must have been—just that . . . anything else—is silly.

DR. GÖRTLER (*slowly*). There has not been in your life so far a moment of crisis that you associate with these flowers?

JANET (*slowly, and staring at him*). No. But that's exactly the feeling I had about them.

DR. GÖRTLER (*prompting her*). And then—you arrived here?

JANET (*rather slowly*). Yes.

(*There is a distinct pause, during which DR. GÖRTLER rises and goes nearer to her.*)

DR. GÖRTLER. You have met Mr. Farrant?

JANET. Yes. But only for a few minutes.

DR. GÖRTLER. He is very young for such a responsible post.

JANET. Yes.

DR. GÖRTLER. But that does not matter, of course. He is fortunate, but he deserves to be. Very clever—and very charming, very good-hearted too, I think— (*He looks at her questioningly.*)

JANET (*rather stiffly*). I'm sure he must be, Doctor Görtler. (*As he stares at her speculatively.*) Why do you stare at me like that?

DR. GÖRTLER. I beg your pardon. I was thinking. (*After a pause.*) Mr. Ormund—does he feel any of these things to-night?

JANET (*with a slight smile*). I think you'd better ask him that yourself.

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes, I will.

JANET (*rather hastily, with a resumption of more social manner*).

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You may find him—a little difficult. I mean—you mustn't mind if he seems rather brusque—odd.

DR. GÖRTLER. Why should I? I am—brusque and odd—myself.

JANET (*hastily*). He's really very kind and considerate, when you know him, but he's got the most tremendous responsibilities. I thought he was going to have a rest this week-end, but he's brought a lot of work with him. He works far too hard.

DR. GÖRTLER (*calmly*). Yes, I think he is an unhappy man.

JANET (*shocked, reproachful*). Doctor Görtler——! (*Then dropping the social manner.*) Why do you say that?

DR. GÖRTLER. I have seen enough unhappiness now to recognize it.

(FARRANT enters with a rather large book under his arm. He and JANET take a quick look at each other. DR. GÖRTLER watches them both. Then FARRANT crosses to the bureau to sit down with his book. You feel the silence. JANET obviously does not like it.

DR. GÖRTLER is interested, watchful.)

JANET (*who must break this horrible silence*). What are your special subjects, Mr. Farrant?

FARRANT (*rather too carefully keeping his place open in the book*). History and economics.

JANET (*doing her best*). I don't care about economics. It never seems to me to be true. But I wish I knew more history—real history, not the dreary stuff they still taught us when I was at school. I'm always meaning to learn more about it.

FARRANT (*with a suggestion of the schoolmaster*). Well, it's going on all round you, y'know. It's not something that's dead and done with. We're making it all the time.

JANET (*with a shade of irony*). I don't feel I'm making very

FARRANT. No, but once you realize you're in history, helping to make it, you see the whole thing differently. That's how we try to teach it now. I show them how completely interdependent we are.

DR. GÖRTLER (*who has been missing nothing*). Yes, we are like threads in a pattern.

FARRANT. There's a pretty example of mutual dependence—

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quite a nice little pattern—here in this pub. Sam and Mrs. Pratt are devoted to this boy of hers, Charlie—

DR. GÖRTLER. He is at your school. So they depend upon you.

FARRANT. Yes. But the school partly depends on the Ormunds, and especially on your husband, Mrs. Ormund—
(*He is interrupted by the entrance of SALLY, who is followed after a moment by ORMUND.*)

SALLY. Excuse me, Mrs. Ormund. But I just wanted to tell you that we have breakfast at half-past eight, if that's not too early.

JANET. No, I'd like it then, Mrs. Pratt.

SALLY. And is that all right for you, Doctor Görtler?

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes, thank you.

SALLY. And would you like a cup of tea earlier on, Mrs. Ormund?

JANET. Not to-morrow morning, thank you. What about you, Walter?

SALLY. Oh—I'm sorry.

ORMUND (*coming forward*). That's all right. No tea. And no breakfast either. Just a pot of strong coffee for me—about half-past nine.

SALLY. All right, Mr. Ormund.

FARRANT (*rather peremptorily*). I'll be out all day again to-morrow, so can I have some sandwiches in the morning, please?

SALLY. Yes, Mr. Farrant.

ORMUND (*to FARRANT*). Going striding over the moors all day?

FARRANT. I'll be out all day, I don't know about striding.

ORMUND (*to JANET*). That's what you want, isn't it? ~~He~~
go along with him.

JANET (*dismayed*). But what are you going to do?

ORMUND. Oh—I'll do a bit of work—and then slack round. You'd better join up with Farrant here. (*To FARRANT.*) She can walk, you know.

FARRANT (*plainly without enthusiasm*). Well—it might be rather rough going—but of course—if you'd like to come along—

JANET (*furious with both men—shortly*). No, thank you. I may want some sandwiches, Mrs. Pratt. I'll let you know in the morning.

(ORMUND goes up to the door and stands looking out.)

SALLY. Yes, Mrs. Ormund. I've a long day to-morrow—Whit-Saturday—an' folks wanting lunches and teas—so I thought I'd get to bed in good time to-night.

JANET. Yes, of course.

SALLY (*somewhat embarrassed*). We're very proud to have you and Mr. Ormund here. Nearly all the money father and I have between us—that we saved to help our Charlie later on—is in Ormunds Limited.

JANET. Do you hear that, Walter? You're among shareholders, so be careful.

ORMUND (*half-turning, with mock groan*). I know, I know.

DR. GÖRTLER. You see. More dependence.

SALLY (*distrusting this*). What's that?

JANET. It sounds like an insult, but it isn't. We've been discovering how much we depend on one another. You're in it because your boy's at Mr. Farrant's school.

SALLY. And very lucky he is to be there, too—with Mr. Farrant looking after him.

JANET. And now you say you've money in Ormunds Limited.

FARRANT. And the school partly depends on Ormunds too. Which brings me in.

JANET. And I'm certainly one of the dependants. Walter, you're the only really great one, the giant Atlas himself. We all depend upon you, but you don't depend upon anybody.

DR. GÖRTLER (*quietly, but with startling effect*). *Nein!*

(*They all stare at him.*)

Mr. Ormund depends very much upon somebody. (To JANET.) He depends upon you—his wife.

ORMUND (*quietly, with cold anger*). That's not the kind of remark we appreciate from a stranger in this country, my dear sir.

JANET. Walter!

ACT I] I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

DR. GÖRTLER (*rising*). I am sorry. I am—as you say—a stranger—in a foreign country.

JANET. It's all right, Doctor Görtler.

DR. GÖRTLER (*as he moves towards the door, to his room*). Good night.

ORMUND (*crossing to him*). No, Doctor. I shouldn't have spoken like that. Now don't be offended.

DR. GÖRTLER (*with a slight smile*). I am not offended. Only tired. So please—no apologies. Good night.

(*The others say "Good night" and watch him go out, closing the door behind him.*)

SALLY (*dropping her voice, dubiously*). I hope it's going to be all right.

JANET. Why, Mrs. Pratt, what's wrong?

SALLY. I mean—him being here.

ORMUND. Yes, of course. Why not?

SALLY. Well, Mr. Ormund—only that he seems to be upsetting you.

FARRANT (*sharply*). Now, Mrs. Pratt! Just because he's a foreigner.

SALLY. No, it isn't that, Mr. Farrant. Though I'll admit I'm not used to foreigners. But what's he doing here?

ORMUND. Well, what are we all doing here?

SALLY. No, that's different, Mr. Ormund. Why should he come here looking for you?

ORMUND (*puzzled*). For me?

SALLY. No, for you three.

(*This linking of the three of them together—for the first time—has its immediate effect, as if it chimed with some deep obscure feeling each of them knew. There is a pause, before SALLY resumes.*)

He comes here—looking about him—and when I tell him we've no room to spare because I'm expecting three visitors—he looks at me and asks if two of 'em are a married couple with the man older than his wife, and the other a younger man. And when I say No, we're expecting three ladies from Manchester, he seems disappointed and says something about it being the wrong year. So off he goes, and then the three ladies say they can't come, and you ring up for rooms, and when he comes back, there's a

room for him too, and you're all here, and it's just what he expected.

ORMUND. Oh—he was looking for somebody, and then gave it up.

SALLY. And then upsetting you like that! He makes me feel right uneasy.

(There is a short pause.)

Nothing more you'll be wanting, Mrs. Ormund?

JANET. No, thank you, Mrs. Pratt. Good night.

SALLY. Good night.

(The two men say "Good night" as she goes out. ORMUND gets some papers from his dispatch-case, preparing to work. FARRANT is going back to his book.)

JANET *(who has obviously been thinking about it all)*. How could he have been looking for us?

ORMUND *(busy with his papers)*. He couldn't.

FARRANT *(looking up—in a light easy tone)*. The arrival of a mysterious foreigner, plus a coincidence, has obviously been too much to-night for poor Mrs. Pratt. And Görtler's prophetic manner has only made it worse.

ORMUND. Yes, he rather asks for it.

JANET *(rising)*. Well, I'm tired, Walter. Your room's the far one.

FARRANT *(casually)*. I thought I'd met him before somewhere.

(The clock chimes.)

JANET *(turning at the door—sharply)*. You did! Where?

FARRANT. That's the trouble. Can't remember.

JANET *(tentatively)*. Has it . . . worried you?

FARRANT *(slightly surprised)*. Yes . . . a little. Why?

JANET. I . . . wondered. *(With decision.)* Walter, will you stop working just one minute—?

ORMUND *(looking up from his work, first at JANET, then at FARRANT, then back to JANET—coolly and humorously)*. You want me to tell you all about it? Quite simple. We're all three a bit off our heads. Farrant says he's been overworking and the doctor sent him away. I've been half-dotty for years. And as for you, Janet, you're just a young woman, always ready to have your fortune told and your horoscope read,

ACT I] I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

always longing for marvels and miracles, not even wanting to be sane.

JANET (*with a smile*). Yes, that's quite simple—and quite silly. (*She moves to the door.*) Good night.

(*She is now in the doorway. The two men stand up and say "Good night." She looks at them a moment, then nods and goes. ORMUND sits down again to resume work, but FARRANT remains standing.*)

FARRANT (*after a pause*). Ormud—I hope—you'll let me talk to you about the school sometime.

ORMUND (*who is filling a pipe*). Yes, of course. Not now, though, not now.

FARRANT (*after another pause, with a touch of nervous diffidence*). I'm—rather worried—— (*He pauses, and ORMUND looks at him.*) I feel—I haven't somehow—created a very good first impression.

ORMUND. On me—or on my wife?

FARRANT. On both of you.

ORMUND. I don't think you have, altogether.

FARRANT. Do you mind—telling me why?

ORMUND. My dear chap, I honestly haven't the least idea. So let's forget it. (*Breaking it off.*) What's your book?

FARRANT. "New Pathways in Science." You might like to look at it afterwards. It answers a lot of questions that have been puzzling me.

ORMUND (*easily, but with an undercurrent of despair*). Yes, but does it answer the questions that have been puzzling me? Who or what are we? What are we supposed to be doing here? What the devil is it all about?

FARRANT. I'm afraid it doesn't.

ORMUND. I thought not. Turning in?

FARRANT (*as he goes*). Yes, I think so. Good night.

ORMUND (*back at his work*). Good night.

ORMUND tries to settle down to his work, but cannot concentrate and looks as if some despairing thought is haunting him. He looks queerly at the wall in front of him, the one he can't see. He rises slowly, and in his distress he snaps the fountain-pen he is holding in two, and as he looks down at the broken pen—

The CURTAIN falls.

ACT II

SCENE.—*As before. Saturday evening. It is still daylight, but though the light is still good, it is that of a clear twilight.*

ORMUND *is sitting at the desk in the window, smoking and doing some work, making notes and calculations. After a moment or two, SAM enters with a tray with bottle of whisky, siphon and glass.*

ORMUND *looks up.*

ORMUND. Sam, you have the noble instincts of a good landlord. Thank you.

SAM *(as he puts the tray on centre table).* Well, t'bar's still pretty full and I thought you'd like it handy in here.

ORMUND *(going over to the table).* Quite right. *(He takes up the bottle.)* But not much in this bottle, Sam.

SAM *(with a grin).* It's one you started on at tea-time, Mr. Ormund.

ORMUND. Then I must have had a very good tea.

SAM *(grinning).* Ay, you didn't do bad.

ORMUND. It looks to me, Sam, as if I drink too much.

SAM. Well, that's not for me to say, Mr. Ormund—

ORMUND. Never mind, Sam, say it, say it.

SAM. I haven't seen many that could shift it better.

ORMUND. Nor carry it better. Admit that, Sam.

SAM. I do, Mr. Ormund. There's one or two as comes here—old Joe Watson, farmer down t'dale, for one—who's got a head on 'em for liquor, but—by gow!—I'd back you, Mr. Ormund, against best of 'em. You'd have 'em under table i' no time.

ORMUND. Yes, Sam, and sometimes it's useful to have 'em under table. But it won't do. If I ask for another bottle to-night, remind me that I drink too much. *(He takes his drink back to the desk and sits.)*

SAM. You've had your supper, haven't you, Mr. Ormund?

ORMUND. Yes. Had it with Doctor Görtler. We got tired of waiting for the other two.

ACT II] I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

SAM (*going to the door*). Ay, they're making a long day of it. Let's hope they haven't got lost.

ORMUND. Not much chance of that, is there?

SAM. No, not on these light nights. It's easy enough i' winter, if you stop too long on t'moors.

(DR. GÖRTLER *enters*.)

I've known a few daftheads that did. But don't you worry. Mr. Farrant's a good head on his shoulders.

ORMUND. I don't think my wife's with Mr. Farrant. They went out separately.

SAM. Oh—well—perhaps she's gone a few mile further than she thought. But she'll be all right, Mr. Ormund.

(SAM *goes out*.)

ORMUND (*after a pause*). Have a drink, Doctor Görtler?

DR. GÖRTLER. No, thank you.

ORMUND (*indifferently*). Don't like too much drinking, eh?

DR. GÖRTLER (*coolly, not priggishly*). It is a kind of escape, and I do not need it. I am not afraid.

ORMUND (*with more attention*). Not afraid of what?

DR. GÖRTLER. I am not afraid of thinking, of reality.

ORMUND (*considering him, after a pause*). I wonder what you think you're doing here?

DR. GÖRTLER (*with a smile*). I am asking questions. (*A pause*.) This drinking, it is an escape—from what?

ORMUND (*really dodging the question*). Well—as you see—not from responsibility—and work.

DR. GÖRTLER. No, I think you work very hard.

ORMUND. I work like hell.

DR. GÖRTLER. And that too is a kind of escape.

ORMUND (*not liking this*). Is it? But don't forget, my dear professor, I've great responsibilities. Even these people here—and their precious boy—would be badly let down if I failed 'em. I have to keep on.

DR. GÖRTLER. No, you give yourself these tasks so that you must keep on. You dare not stop.

ORMUND (*with an effort*). All right. I dare not stop.

(*He turns to his notes and looks as if he wanted to be done with this*

talk, yet cannot bring himself to break it off definitely. There is a pause.)

DR. GÖRTLER (*with a shade of irony*). And yet—you are rich.

ORMUND (*turning*). Have you ever been rich, Doctor Görtler, or lived among the rich?

DR. GÖRTLER (*who has his own irony—rising*). No, I have only been poor, and lived among the poor. But that is quite an experience too.

ORMUND. I've no illusions about that. But being rich isn't simply the opposite of being poor. It's not really worth much—being rich. Half the time there's a thick glass wall between you and most of the fun and friendliness of the world. There's something devilishly dull about most of the rich. Too much money seems to take the taste and colour out of things. It oughtn't to do, but it does—damn it!

DR. GÖRTLER. But power—you have that, haven't you?

ORMUND. Yes, and that's a very different thing.

DR. GÖRTLER. Ah!—you like power.

ORMUND. Well, you get some fun out of it. I don't mean bullying a lot of poor devils. But putting ideas into action. And not being at the end of somebody else's bit of string.

DR. GÖRTLER. And yet that is what you always feel, and that is why you try to escape.

ORMUND (*sharply*). What do you mean?

DR. GÖRTLER. That you are—as you say—at the end of a bit of string.

ORMUND (*facing DR. GÖRTLER*). Nonsense! Do I look like—a puppet?

DR. GÖRTLER (*calmly*). No. But I say you feel like one. (*He pauses, then with calm force.*) You are rich. You are successful. You have power. Yet all the time you try to escape, because deep down you feel that your part in this life is settled for you and that it is a tragic one. So all the time you are in despair. (*As ORMUND does not reply.*) Is that not true?

ORMUND (*half-wondering and half-angry*). Yes—damn your impudence!—it is. (*He moves restlessly.*)

DR. GÖRTLER (*pressing him*). Now please tell me why you—who have so much—should feel this despair.

ACT II] I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

ORMUND (*speaking more freely than before*). I suppose—in the last resort—you trust life—or you don't. Well—I don't. There's something malicious . . . corrupt . . . cruel . . . at the heart of it. Nothing's on our side. We don't belong. We're a mistake.

DR. GÖRTLER. But you have known—good things?

ORMUND (*looking down now at the sitting GÖRTLER*). Yes. When you're young, you snatch at 'em and then find they're bait in a trap. Cheese for the mice. One nibble, you're caught and the wires are boring through your guts. I can feel 'em there.

DR. GÖRTLER. No. It is something in yourself, something that hates life.

ORMUND. All right, it's something in me. Something that's waiting to blot out the whole bloody business. (*He moves restlessly, then finally speaks with more freedom.*) Görtler—when I was a boy I watched my mother die—of cancer. For two years she was tortured . . . she might as well have been put on the rack and broken on the wheel . . . and when she couldn't suffer any longer . . . when there was nothing left to feel any more devilish bloody torment . . . she was allowed to escape, to die. You see, there wasn't any more fun to be had out of her. Let her go.

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes, that was bad. But did she complain?

ORMUND. No, she didn't complain much. She was a very brave woman. I remember—when she could bear it no longer and screamed in the night, she'd apologize next morning. (*With terrible irony.*) She was sorry if she'd disturbed us, Görtler, she was sorry if she'd disturbed us! . . . (*He pauses.*) No, *she* didn't complain—but—by God!—I complain.

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes, I understand. (*Pause.*) You feel too much and do not know enough.

ORMUND (*grimly*). I know too much.

DR. GÖRTLER. No. You are like a child who thinks ~~because~~ it rains one morning, he will never play out of doors again. You believe we have only this one existence?

ORMUND. Of course.

DR. GÖRTLER (*with irony*). Of course. We all know that

now. It is so obvious. But what a pity—if we are brutes that perish—we have not the dim feelings of brutes that perish. To have this one short existence and to spend it being tortured by cancer—to be given delicate nerves and consciousness only to feel pain—that would be a terrible cruelty. It would be better that nobody should be born at all.

ORMUND. I've thought so many a time.

DR. GÖRTLER. Because you do not understand the long drama of the soul. To suffer like that, then to die young, that is not easy nor pleasant, but it is a rôle, a part—like any other brief appearance here—

ORMUND (*harshly, as he moves restlessly*). I'm sorry, Doctor. That may mean something to you. It means nothing to me. Just so many fine useless words.

DR. GÖRTLER (*with authority and dignity*). You will please remember, Mr. Ormund, that all my life I have been a man of science, and then a philosopher.

(SALLY enters, hears them speaking, goes out quickly.)

I am not a political orator. My fine words mean something. (*He pauses.*) You were in the War?

ORMUND. Yes. I went all through it. My brother was killed. And before the lunacy stopped, I'd found half a dozen fellows who were nearly as good as brothers, but they never lasted long. . . . I came out of it to find the whole world limping on one foot and with a hole in its head. . . . Most of us are really half crazy. I know I am.

DR. GÖRTLER. But when you began to forget about the War, things were better, eh?

ORMUND. No. I didn't forget, and things were worse. They were very bad indeed—when—I met my wife, Janet. Then things looked different for a time— (*He breaks off, then resumes in a more normal tone.*) Well, that's how it's been. Not very cheerful. But I don't suppose you've had a rollicking time.

DR. GÖRTLER (*quietly and with great dignity*). I lost my only son in the War—a young boy. I saw all my family and friends ruined by the economic collapse of Germany. I think it was the worry, the shame, of that period which killed my wife.

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And now I have seen my pupils taken away from me, and have been turned out of my university and out of my country.

ORMUND. I'm sorry, Doctor Görtler.

DR. GÖRTLER. Yet I do not hate life. I accept it all. Because, you see—there is no traitor—here—— (*He touches his chest.*)

ORMUND. You think there is—in me?

DR. GÖRTLER. I do not know. I can only guess.

ORMUND (*after a pause, more freely*). Görtler, I'll tell you something I've never told anybody. All my life, I've had a haunted sort of feeling . . . as if, just round the corner, there'd be a sudden blotting out of everything. During the War I thought it meant I was going to be killed, so I didn't give a damn what I did and they thought I was a brave fellow and pinned medals on me. But when it was all over, I still had the same feeling. It's getting stronger all the time.

DR. GÖRTLER. And then, last night, when you arrived here——

ORMUND. How did you notice that? I didn't know I gave myself away.

DR. GÖRTLER. What did you feel?

ORMUND. I felt like a man staring into his grave.

DR. GÖRTLER. When you entered this room?

ORMUND. Yes, yes.

DR. GÖRTLER. When you saw your bedroom?

ORMUND (*rather impatiently*). Yes, yes.

DR. GÖRTLER. But it was worst in the garage?

ORMUND (*surprised*). The garage? I haven't been in the garage. Sam put my car away last night and I haven't looked at it since—(*He stops, stares at DR. GÖRTLER suspiciously, then with urgency*)—How did you know I kept it there?

DR. GÖRTLER. Where?

ORMUND. In the car.

DR. GÖRTLER. Kept what in the car?

ORMUND. My revolver.

DR. GÖRTLER (*significantly*). So!

ORMUND. I keep a revolver in a side pocket of the car. How did you know that?

DR. GÖRTLER. I did not know.

ORMUND. Then why did you ask me about the garage?

DR. GÖRTLER. I wanted to know what you had felt there, that is all.

ORMUND (*after staring at him a moment, calls*). Sam. Sam.

DR. GÖRTLER. Be careful.

(SALLY enters.)

SALLY. Father's busy in the bar, Mr. Ormund. Can I get you anything?

ORMUND. Is the garage open?

SALLY. Yes, Mr. Ormund, straight across the yard.

DR. GÖRTLER. Do you want me to come with you?

(SALLY gives them a sharp look. ORMUND goes out leaving the door ajar. DR. GÖRTLER looks anxiously after him. SALLY looks at DR. GÖRTLER, curiously and dubiously.)

SALLY. Oh—Doctor—er—(*as he turns*)—I don't think you said how long you wanted your room, did you?

DR. GÖRTLER (*puzzled by this*). Yes. I said it last night, when I came here.

SALLY (*coldly*). I don't remember. It wasn't said to me.

DR. GÖRTLER. I said I wanted it over the week-end. I could not tell, exactly.

SALLY. Well, folks who come here usually know how long they're staying.

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes, but I could not say. I have something to do here.

SALLY (*eyeing him*). Something to do?

DR. GÖRTLER (*still anxious about ORMUND, not bothering about her*). Yes, yes, something very important.

SALLY (*hostile*). Oh, I see.

DR. GÖRTLER (*really attending to her now*). There is no need to talk to me in this way. I have done you no injury. I am quite a harmless person, even though I am a foreigner—and was once a professor.

SALLY. And so you want to know what's the matter?

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes, there is evidently something. What have I done?

ACT II] I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

SALLY (*sturdily*). Well—seeing you've asked me, Doctor—er—I'll tell you. You make me feel uneasy in my mind. That wouldn't be so bad, but I've noticed you've a trick of upsetting other people too. And I don't like it.

(*She is about to turn away, when a revolver shot is heard from outside. It is a startling report. She and DR. GÖRTLER give a cry.*)

DR. GÖRTLER (*urgently*). Ormund!

(*He hurries to the door and goes out. SALLY stands, a hand pressed to her side, breathing rapidly. SAM comes in hastily. You feel all these people are unusually nervous to-night.*)

SAM (*hastily*). What was that, Sally? Who's playing about wi' a gun so near t'house?

SALLY (*breathlessly*). I don't know. Go and see.

(*As SAM is about to go, ORMUND enters, followed by DR. GÖRTLER. ORMUND looks pale and shaken, but tries to be hearty and genial.*)

ORMUND (*loudly*). That's all right. Hello, Sam, did it bring you out? Sorry, Mrs. Pratt. Silly thing to do—very silly.

SALLY. But whatever happened, Mr. Ormund?

ORMUND. Went to the garage to have a look at my car and remembered I had a revolver in the side pocket. Took it out to see if it was all right, and nearly got to the door when something went scampering past, making me jump.

SAM. A rat, eh?

ORMUND. Yes. Big brute. And I've always hated rats ever since they used to come snuffling over me in the trenches. So I had to have a pop at him.

SAM. Ay. Did you get him, Mr. Ormund?

ORMUND. Didn't even get him, Sam. (*He pours out another good drink.*) Just made a noise and frightened you all. Sorry, Mrs. Pratt. Won't occur again.

SAM. Ay, well, I don't know why it should have bothered me so much—but—

SALLY (*cutting him short*). All right, Father, they'll be wanting you in the bar.

(*She pushes him out, follows and shuts the door. ORMUND, no longer bothering to keep up appearances, drops into the chair, takes a huge*

I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE [ACT II

drink, then rests his head in his hands and rubs his forehead, as if both baffled and depressed.)

DR. GÖRTLER. I am sorry.

ORMUND (*suddenly jumping up, with passion*). Sorry, sorry! Yes, I went into the garage. Now what do I do next? You must have some more amusing ideas. (*Going close to DR. GÖRTLER.*) Who the devil are you to come here and take the lid off my head and stick pins into my guts and say you're sorry?

DR. GÖRTLER. I am not amusing myself with you, Mr. Ormund.

ORMUND (*laying a hand on him, glaring at him*). No? Well, what are you doing here? What's your game?

DR. GÖRTLER (*with authority*). It is not a game. Tell me what happened. (*As ORMUND does not reply.*) Please.

ORMUND. What I told them about the rat was true. But of course that wasn't all.

DR. GÖRTLER. No, I knew that.

ORMUND. It wasn't so bad until I took out the revolver. And I had to take it out—irresistible impulse. But as soon as I stood there with that gun in my hand, I seemed to be falling into black night, and I felt the only thing left for me to do on earth was to put that revolver to my head. How I struggled to the door I don't know, but then I had to pull the trigger. Luckily there was the rat to fire at. At least, I suppose there was a rat. Perhaps not. I'm crazy enough to invent a rat or two. Was there a rat?

DR. GÖRTLER. I do not know.

ORMUND (*rather wildly*). Thank God, there's something you don't know. (*He tries the bottle, which is empty.*) Damn! Look at that. (*Calls.*) Sam, Sam. (*Enter SALLY.*) Oh—Mrs. Pratt—I want a drink and this bottle's dead and done with.

SALLY (*taking it*). Bar's quieter now, Mr. Ormund, if you'd like to go back there.

ORMUND. I would.

(*He nods to DR. GÖRTLER and goes out. SALLY remains behind collecting Ormund's glass and siphon. Then she stands looking at*

ACT II] I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

DR. GÖRTLER *in an unfriendly manner, but hesitating to speak. He has been thinking, but now catches her eye.*)

DR. GÖRTLER. Is there something you wish to say to me?

SALLY *(with an effort)*. Yes—there is. There seems to have been a misunderstanding about your room, Dr.—er—

DR. GÖRTLER *(deliberately)*. Görtler—Gört-ler. And I think the misunderstanding is not about my room, but about me, Mrs. Pratt.

SALLY *(heavily)*. I said nothing about you.

DR. GÖRTLER. No.

(While they are looking at each other, they are interrupted by the entrance of JANET. She is dressed for walking and looks tired. She is carrying some wild moorland flowers.)

SALLY *(glad of this interruption)*. Well, you *have* had a long day, Mrs. Ormund. But I thought Mr. Farrant would be with you.

JANET. No. But he'll be here soon. Oh—I'm tired. *(Sits, as if almost exhausted.)*

SALLY. I expect you are. Well, I'll see about your suppers.

JANET. I don't want very much, Mrs. Pratt.

SALLY. What! after being out all day! That's no way of going on. You want a good meal.

(She nods, smiles, and goes out.)

DR. GÖRTLER *(smiling)*. For once, I think, Mrs. Pratt is right. You must eat plenty of supper. And it is good, too. These people here—not like so many of the English now—they still have good food.

JANET *(lazily)*. Yes—when I see it—I'll probably be quite greedy. But, you know how it is, sometimes when you're feeling tired, the idea of enormous platefuls of food . . . isn't . . . very attractive. . . .

DR. GÖRTLER. You walked a long way?

JANET. Further than I meant to.

DR. GÖRTLER. But it was a good walk?

JANET *(dreamily)*. Heavenly . . . across the moors nearly all the way. . . . I found a sort of tiny secret glen . . . with a little waterfall . . . and mossy rocks . . . carpets of grass . . . harebells. . . .

(*The clock chimes.*)

DR. GÖRTLER. White harebells again?

JANET. Yes . . . white harebells again. . . . You remember things, don't you, Doctor Görtler?

DR. GÖRTLER. Only sometimes. My wife used to say I remembered nothing. But that was because I always forgot anniversary days or what to take home from shops. (*He pauses and smiles across at JANET.*) It was peaceful up there?

JANET. Yes . . . no people . . . just larks and curlews . . . very peaceful, very innocent. . . . I think there's something—almost startling—in the innocence one feels about this sort of country—

DR. GÖRTLER. In these high wastelands?

JANET. Yes. You must have felt it, haven't you?

DR. GÖRTLER (*with great tenderness*). Yes. Every summer I used to walk on the Thuringian mountains—with my family and my friends. Ah!—we did not even know how happy we were, to be together and have such summer days— (*His voice drops; he is greatly moved.*) I think it would have broken our hearts then to know how happy and fortunate we were—

JANET (*moved with him*). Doctor Görtler—I'm so sorry—

DR. GÖRTLER (*with an innocent natural pedagogic sense, half pathetic and half comic*). These high places have never been settled by men, so they are still innocent. There is not about them any accumulation of evil. Where men have lived a long time, the very stones are saturated in evil memories. Cruelty and suffering remain in the world, and I think the earth cries out under its load of evil.

JANET. But the past has gone.

DR. GÖRTLER. Gone where? (*There is a pause.*) So Mr. Farrant was not with you?

JANET. No. . . . I was alone, all day. I was glad to be.

DR. GÖRTLER (*smiling*). To think?

JANET. No . . . you wouldn't call it thinking . . . almost a sort of day-dreaming. . . .

DR. GÖRTLER (*after a pause*). You—did not see Mr. Farrant to-day, then?

JANET. Yes. . . . I saw him. . . .

ACT II] I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

DR. GÖRTLER. Of course. You told Mrs. Pratt he would be here soon.

JANET. Yes. . . . I saw him . . . following . . . behind me.

DR. GÖRTLER. And he couldn't catch up to you?

JANET. He didn't catch up to me. . . . I saw him somewhere behind me . . . usually a long way off . . . several times . . . half the day, I suppose. . . .

DR. GÖRTLER. You were glad he stayed behind?

JANET. Yes, very. (*Changing to a more normal, social tone.*) I suppose Walter—my husband—is in the bar?

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes, he has just gone there. Before that we were talking. (*He pauses.*) He is a man of force, of character, such as most women admire, eh?

JANET. Yes, he is.

DR. GÖRTLER (*slowly*). Also, he is a man with deep secret weaknesses, and I think such weaknesses in such a man arouse a woman's pity.

JANET. Yes, I think they might.

DR. GÖRTLER (*after a pause*). There is much to love in him.

JANET. Very much.

DR. GÖRTLER (*softly*). Then why, Mrs. Ormund, do you love him no longer?

(JANET, both socially offended and really wounded, rises slowly, obviously giving DR. GÖRTLER to understand he has been offensive, though she does not say anything.)

You are offended. I am sorry.

(JANET controls herself, then speaks in a lighter, social tone, itself a rebuke though not a strong one.)

JANET. Is it true, Doctor Görtler, that time is curved? I read somewhere the other day that it is.

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes, it is. But time is not single and universal. It is only the name we give to higher dimensions of things. In our present state of consciousness, we cannot experience these dimensions spatially, but only successively. That we call time. But there are more times than one—

(SALLY has entered, and one might detect a certain pleasure she has in interrupting DR. GÖRTLER.)

I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE [Act II

say to us. He's depending on you to see him through, and so are we. And he thinks the world of you, I'm sure.

FARRANT (*as he rises and goes slowly to the door*). And we'll see him through. We'll have you nearly bursting with pride over him one day. I must wash.

SALLY. Shall I get you some hot water?

FARRANT. No, thanks.

(*He goes out. SAM enters.*)

SAM. Well, lass?

SALLY. What was all that commotion just now in t'bar?

SAM (*grinning*). Oh—that was only Mr. Ormund having a bit of a game wi' old Watson and Joe.

SALLY (*dropping her voice*). Is he drunk?

SAM (*dropping his*). Who? Mr. Ormund? Well—amount he's taken to-night he ought to be silly drunk or unconscious—I know I'd be—but you can't say he's more nor a bit wild like. By gow, he can shift it, that chap.

SALLY. And I call it a silly way o' going on. Can't you stop him?

SAM. 'Course I can't. It's not as if he were daft with it. He's only a bit wild.

SALLY. Well, I don't like it, Father.

SAM. No, perhaps not. Still—

SALLY (*continuing, unhappily*). I'm right sorry now Miss Holmes and her friends couldn't come. I can understand them sort o' folk. I've felt uneasy in my mind ever since last night. And I put most of it down to this Doctor Görtler. He's got everybody's back up.

SAM. Nay, it's only 'cos he's a sort of foreigner and a professor and what not, and talks so queer. He means no harm, Sally.

SALLY (*with sudden anger*). Harm or no harm, he leaves here in t'morning. We'll get on better without him. And I'm going to tell him so.

SAM. Now steady on, lass, steady on.

SALLY (*angrily*). What's use of saying "steady on" when we're all getting on edge—

ACT II] I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

(*She is interrupted by ORMUND, who enters a trifle unsteadily, a glass of whisky in his hand. He has obviously had a lot to drink, but is not conventionally drunk.*)

ORMUND. Sam, Sam, you're deserting us. And you've not told me yet what's going to happen to you in the next world.

SALLY (*hastily*). Mrs. Ormund's back, Mr. Ormund. She's gone to get her supper.

ORMUND (*perching himself on the table*). See that she has a beautiful supper, Mrs. Pratt. Including your gooseberry pie. Don't stand any high-brow nonsense from her on that subject. She must take her share of gooseberry pie. See to it!

(*He waves at SALLY, who nods, smiles faintly, and goes out.*)

Now, Sam, what's going to happen to you in the next world?

SAM. Nay, he didn't say t'next world—

(*FARRANT enters. He still looks pale and strained.*)

ORMUND. Hello, Farrant. Did you show my wife the moors to-day?

FARRANT (*rather shortly*). No.

ORMUND. Weren't you together?

FARRANT. No. I saw her. But we weren't together.

ORMUND. Why didn't you join up?

FARRANT (*rather stiffly*). I don't know. I suppose we both preferred our own company.

ORMUND. That's not very complimentary of you.

FARRANT. Sorry. I didn't mean to sound offensive. Actually, I was feeling—rather dreary, and thought I'd better keep it to myself.

ORMUND (*pleasantly*). Well, well. Sam's just going to tell me what our friend Doctor Görtler says will happen to him when he dies.

FARRANT. Well, you know what to expect. I believe Görtler's turning mystical, like so many Germans when things go wrong.

ORMUND. He's had a packet, you know.

FARRANT. Yes, and I think it's a rotten shame. But even that doesn't excuse a man of science who's begun to talk bosh.

ORMUND. I suppose it is bosh.

FARRANT. From one or two things he said to me last night, I'm afraid it will be. Perhaps I'm too impatient with that easy, optimistic half-thinking, but it does seem to me to be poor stuff in itself and to get in the way of real thought. We shan't get out of the muddle we're in except by thinking hard and realistically. Don't you agree?

ORMUND. We shan't begin to get out of it until we really *want* to get out. What sort of thinking is going to make us *want* to get out, that's the point.

FARRANT. Well, it won't be Görtler's Teutonic mistiness, will it? I must go and eat.

(He nods and goes out.)

ORMUND *(in a whisper)*. Sam, believe it or not, it was I who voted him into that headmastership at Lamberton. And now having met the young man, I don't like him, and he doesn't like me.

SAM *(stoutly)*. Nay, Mr. Ormund, Mr. Farrant's a grand young chap when you get to know him. Before you came, he was great company, but this last day or two he's happen been a bit short and sharp. I fancy he's not so well again.

ORMUND. Perhaps that's it. But now then, Sam, let's hear what's going to happen to you—let's have some bosh.

SAM. Well, it started with me saying last night: "If I'd my time over again," which seemed to right tickle Doctor Görtler. Because he comes to me this afternoon and tells me I'm going to have my time over again. He started on about time going round i' circles an' spirals, an' i' two minutes, what with his dimensions and eternities and what not, he had me dizzy. He says we all go round and round like dobbyhorses.

ORMUND. God forbid!

SAM. Nay, don't say that, Mr. Ormund, 'cos I'm all for this arrangement. He says I'm one o' them that'll go on and on wi' t'same life an' never change. When I die, I'm born all over again, down at Marlingset, same house, same parents, go to t'same school an' have t'same fights wi' t'other lads, just t'same as before.

ORMUND. But you wouldn't like that, Sam, would you?

SAM. I ask for naught better. It's champion. I wor telling

ACT II] I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

him about day I wor wed. We wor wed early an' then I took her down to Leeds—eh, an' it wor a grand day an' all—Wharfedale shining an' smiling all t'way down—an' Yorkshire wor playing Surrey at Headingley, an' so o' course we went—an' Brown an' Tunncliffe an' F. S. Jackson knocked them Surrey bowlers silly—an' then we went back to big high tea at Queen's Hotel. Eh, what a day!

ORMUND. Yes, that would be worth having again.

SAM. Well, I says to him, "Now, is that day coming round again?" An' he says, "Yes, it's on its way. Same bright morning," he says, "same blushing girl," he says, "same sun on t'same fields—everything." "That'll do me," I says.

ORMUND (*half amused, half serious*). Lucky for you, Sam. But does he seriously think we all just go on and on with the same life?

SAM. Ay, I think so. That's what he told me.

(DR. GÖRTLER *enters*. *They turn and see him.*)

Doctor, didn't you tell me we all went on wi' t'same life round an' round an' round?

DR. GÖRTLER. I said you might live the same life over and over again. But not all.

SAM. Well, what happens to t'others then, Doctor?

DR. GÖRTLER. Some people, steadily developing, will exhaust the possibilities of their circles of time and will finally swing out of them into new existences. Others—the criminals, madmen, suicides—live their lives in ever-darkening circles of their time. Fatality begins to haunt them. More and more of their lives are passed in the shadow of death. They gradually sink——

ORMUND (*passionately*). For Christ's sake—stop it, can't you! (*He goes toward DR. GÖRTLER as if to strike him, then controls himself and swings away, muttering.*)

I don't want to hear any more of that stuff to-night. It's getting on my nerves.

(*He goes out. SAM looks reproachfully at DR. GÖRTLER.*)

SAM. You've gone and put your foot in it again, Doctor.

DR. GÖRTLER (*staring after ORMUND thoughtfully*). Yes. Per-

haps I was wrong to come here. Or wrong to speak at all of these things.

(Enter SALLY purposefully.)

SALLY (*decisively*). Just a minute, Father.

SAM (*lowering his voice*). Now, steady on, Sally.

SALLY (*getting rid of him*). All right, all right.

(SAM goes. SALLY and DR. GÖRTLER look at each other.)

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes?

SALLY. Doctor Görtler, there's been a misunderstanding about your room. I thought you were just staying last night and to-night and—well—I promised somebody that room for to-morrow and Monday—and it's somebody who's stayed here many a time—so—you see—

DR. GÖRTLER. You mean, that you want me to go?

SALLY. I didn't say so. I said we wanted that room.

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes, but you have nobody coming for it to-morrow.

SALLY (*sturdily*). No, but we soon can have. I said that because I didn't want to hurt your feelings.

DR. GÖRTLER. You have already hurt my feelings. But tell me the real reason why you wish me to leave.

SALLY (*with force*). Well, if you want to know, it's because I feel there's something wrong here. I don't know what it is, but I can feel it all the time. And so can other people.

DR. GÖRTLER. Perhaps there is something wrong here.

SALLY. Well, there wasn't before you came. And you arrived in a queer sort of way—asking who was staying here and all that. And you've got a way of talking and looking at folk that puts 'em on edge. You may not mean it, and then again you may. But I do know we'd all be a deal more comfortable if you were gone. And we think a lot o' Mr. Farrant, and Mr. and Mrs. Ormund are folk o' some standing—

DR. GÖRTLER (*with sad irony*). And I am a stranger, a foreigner.

SALLY. Well, if you want to put it like that, you can do. But that's how it is. We don't expect you to go to-night, y'know.

DR. GÖRTLER (*with sudden passion*). I will go when I please. You want to be rid of me—that is enough. I will pay you now.

ACT II] I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

SALLY. Up to to-morrow morning it'll be just two days. We'll call it a pound.

(He gives her a pound note and, turning away, goes to the door, opens it wide and stands looking out.)

(Uncomfortably.) I'm sorry—but we only want to do what's right for everybody——

DR. GÖRTLER *(curtly)*. I am sorry too—for you.

SALLY *(shortly)*. You needn't be sorry for me.

(She goes out. DR. GÖRTLER looks out of the door a moment longer, then leaving it wide open, turns and goes up to his room. The clock chimes and strikes ten. During the sixth stroke, ORMUND enters, followed by SAM, leaving the door open behind them.)

ORMUND. He's not here.

SAM *(indicating the open door)*. Must ha' gone out. Sally, Sally.

(SALLY appears, looking a trifle upset.)

Has Doctor Görtler gone out, 'cos Mr. Ormund wants him?

ORMUND. I want to apologize to him.

SALLY *(sulkily)*. He must have gone out. He's off in the morning.

ORMUND. Going? What for?

SALLY *(defiantly)*. Because I asked him to go.

SAM. Nay, Sally, you didn't.

SALLY. Well, you wouldn't. You shuffled out of it. *(She turns to go.)*

ORMUND *(with authority)*. Just a minute, Mrs. Pratt. Did you really ask Doctor Görtler to leave this inn?

SALLY *(defiantly)*. I did. And I'm not sorry. He's made everybody feel uncomfortable. I heard you complaining and shouting at him yourself, Mr. Ormund.

ORMUND *(ruefully)*. Yes, God help me!

SALLY. So I think I did right.

ORMUND. No, you did wrong.

SALLY. Why did I?

ORMUND. Because he's a stranger, a foreigner, who's had to leave his own country. Even if he says things we don't understand, even if he makes us feel uncomfortable at times, we

ought to be courteous. God knows I haven't been. But I was hoping *you* were being considerate to him. My fault probably. I could kick myself.

SAM. Why, Mr. Ormund, I can't see it matters much.

ORMUND (*broadly*). It does, Sam, it does. All over this rotten world now, they're slamming doors in the faces of good men. But we've still a door or two open here. We can't bang one of them in the face of this man, who's done none of us any harm. (*He glances at the door.*) He can't have gone far. I'm going to tell him I'm sorry and ashamed.

(*He goes out hastily. SAM looks after him dubiously, then at SALLY.*)

SAM. You shouldn't ha' done it, Sally.

SALLY. Why not? We've got our living to earn—and work hard enough to earn it—and we're the best judge of our own business. It's all right Mr. Ormund talking so grand now. And how much whisky has *he* had?

SAM. I know. But he's far from being nasty-drunk, so I can't interfere. Only one that could is his wife, and it beats me she doesn't.

SALLY (*lowering her voice*). Perhaps she's given him up as a bad job.

(*She does not say any more because JANET enters. There is a slight, awkward pause.*)

Did you enjoy your supper all right, Mrs. Ormund?

JANET (*who has a strained look*). Yes, thank you.

SALLY (*motioning SAM out*). You won't be wanting anything else to-night?

JANET. No, thank you.

SAM (*rather awkwardly*). Mr. Ormund's just gone out.

(*JANET nods. As SALLY and SAM are going out, FARRANT appears.*)

SALLY. You won't be wanting anything else, will you, Mr. Farrant?

FARRANT. No, thank you.

SALLY. What about to-morrow? Will you be going out all day again?

FARRANT (*hastily*). I don't know yet. I haven't made any plans.

ACT II] I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

(*They all say "Good night," and SALLY and SAM go out. JANET and FARRANT are left silent, not looking at each other. The sense of strain is definitely felt. At last JANET can endure it no longer.*)

JANET. Mr. Farrant.

FARRANT (*rather startled*). Yes?

JANET. This afternoon you walked just behind me for several hours. We've just sat through the whole of supper without exchanging a word. I'm sorry, but I can't stand any more of it. If you're going to sit in here, then I'll either go out or up to my room.

FARRANT. Please don't trouble, I'll go.

JANET (*watching him—with a touch of irony*). Thank you.

(*He stands awkwardly, looking doubtfully at her, and not moving.*)

Yes?

FARRANT (*jerkily*). Would you mind—telling me—how long you're staying up here? ●

JANET. I really don't see why I should. (*Pause.*) Why do you ask?

FARRANT. Because if you're not leaving, then I must leave.

JANET. I didn't realize you disliked me as much as that.

FARRANT. I don't dislike you. It isn't that. I'd better clear out in the morning.

JANET. But you've no right to talk as if I'm driving you out.

FARRANT. No, I don't mean that, Mrs. Ormund.

JANET (*moving a step or two nearer*). I'm not trying to be difficult. It's simply that I find these long silences intolerable.

FARRANT (*a step nearer to her*). I know they are. I feel just the same. And I do assure you—it's quite unusual for me. I'm often accused of talking too much. But—you see—last night I never slept at all——

JANET. Neither did I, for that matter. But that doesn't excuse us——

FARRANT. No, no, I know. But then, you see, all to-day when I was out, of course I felt fagged. You must have done too.

JANET. I did. And when I came back, I felt absolutely worn out. I couldn't possibly make any effort at supper. Still, I think you might have done——

FARRANT. I tried, y'know, tried all the time. I kept—you know how one does—kept forming words——

JANET (*taking a step forward*). Yes, I did that too. But couldn't bring them out.

FARRANT. Exactly. And then when I came in here, the silence had gone on so long, it seemed—y'know—absolutely indestructible——

JANET. It was nearly. I had to take a hammer to it.

FARRANT (*moving a step nearer*). I'm glad you did, because I wanted to explain. You must think me a fool——

JANET (*quicker than before*). No. Of course I felt you disliked me, but then with not sleeping last night and being so tired to-day, you see——

FARRANT (*eagerly, very quickly*). Yes, well, probably I'm imagining I'm fitter than I am, y'know——

JANET (*she is quite close to him now*). You look rather nervously tired——

FARRANT (*looking at her, his hands behind him*). Perhaps we're both—y'know—not quite—our usual selves.

JANET. No.

(*Involuntarily she steps into his arms and he holds her to him. The clock chimes. A tremendous inevitability rather than a sudden gust of passion is felt here. They remain in this embrace for a few moments. They only draw their faces away to speak.*)

FARRANT (*dazed*). I didn't know. . . . I didn't know.

(*There is a pause.*)

JANET (*whispering*). What shall we do?

(*He now does definitely hold her close and they kiss. They are quite ecstatic. Then before they have time to separate, ORMUND has entered, clearly taking in the situation. They stand apart, dumb.*)

ORMUND (*from just inside the door*). There may be a storm. And it's nearly Whit-Sunday—the Feast of Pentecost—the Day of the Spirit, they used to call it. And—curiously enough—they didn't mean motor spirit—quick-starting, anti-knock petrol. They didn't know about that. They didn't know anything. We know it all. Farrant knows it all and is passing on our knowledge to our lucky boys——

ACT II] I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

(He breaks off and comes forward, looking at the other two, who are still dumb.)

And now what?

(They are silent.)

Come on then—damn you!—talk, talk, let's hear all about it.

(They are silent.)

I suppose you arranged to meet here. No? Then if you've got so far as this in twenty-four hours, I ought to congratulate you. It's wonderful how everything's being speeded up.

(There is another pause.)

Come on, Farrant. Good God, aren't you man enough to stand up for what you're doing?

FARRANT. Ormund—I wish I could explain——

ORMUND. I can do that. ♣

JANET. No, Walter, please. We've got to try and understand what's happening——

ORMUND *(bitterly)*. No difficulty about that. In one day, while the pair of you were pretending to dislike each other, you've suddenly decided you're in love—or in want of amusement—and couldn't even wait——

JANET *(with force)*. No, Walter, can't you see it's not like that?

ORMUND. How can I see what it's like?

FARRANT. Ormund, it's—simply—happened, that's all. Beyond that, we can't explain.

(ORMUND walks away, then turns in a quieter mood.)

ORMUND. All right, all right. You're neither of you in any fit state to talk, and I know I'm in no fit state to listen. You've fallen in love. You don't know why. You can't help it. That it?

FARRANT. Yes.

JANET. Can't you see we're quite bewildered and helpless? *(She pauses, then with more urgency.)* You remember what I felt last night when we arrived here, and I didn't want to stay.

ORMUND. You think you felt then that—this—was about to begin?

JANET. Yes.

ORMUND. But you don't know how it's going to end. How does it end? We'd better ask Doctor Görtler.

JANET (*urgently*). Why do you say that?

FARRANT (*quickly*). He's not serious.

ORMUND. I'm in a state of mind when I've stopped considering whether I'm serious or not. Ask Görtler. Ask the devil.

FARRANT. But Görtler doesn't come into this at all.

ORMUND. Don't be too sure, Farrant.

JANET (*as if making a tremendous discovery*). He knew it had happened before.

FARRANT (*quickly*). He couldn't have done.

JANET. He came to find us here.

ORMUND (*almost in a whisper*). My God!—I'd hate to think that.

JANET. Why, what do you mean?

ORMUND. I've had one grim session with him to-night. What does Görtler know?

FARRANT (*with quick contempt*). Nothing about this.

JANET (*suddenly sinking on to the sofa, exhausted, then speaking slowly*). I believe he knows everything about us all.

(*There is a pause.*)

ORMUND (*harshly*). Well, what do we do now?

JANET (*in a whisper*). I'm frightened.

(*As they look at each other in silence—DR. GÖRTLER crosses the stage in a curiously detached, almost mechanical fashion, carrying his bag. He does not look at them, but they watch him in silence, staring in fascination and amazement at him. They only speak when he is nearing the door.*)

(*In a terribly alarmed tone.*) Doctor Görtler!

ORMUND (*in alarm and despair*). Görtler!

But he ignores them and walks straight out of the door, banging it behind him, and they remain motionless, staring after him, and then slowly turning their eyes to one another, while the CURTAIN rapidly descends.

CURTAIN

ACT III

(Sunday night. Late evening light. Both doors are closed. The clock chimes. After a moment, SALLY comes in and goes to the telephone.)

SALLY. No! I was sure I heard it. *(Over her shoulder to SAM, who is following her.)* Come in, Father, there's nobody here. Surely they can't be much longer getting that call through. It's past his bedtime now.

SAM. Well, if t'lad's in bed, he's all right.

SALLY *(sharply, she is worried)*. Unless he's poorly. And how do I know he's safe in bed?

SAM. Why shouldn't he be?

SALLY. I've told you before, Father—I don't know. I expect I'm making a fool of myself. But I can't help it.

SAM. All right, lass, I'm not blaming you.

SALLY. I'm sorry, Father, I didn't mean to be short with you. And if it were anybody else but our Charlie, I'd laugh at myself for getting into such a state.

(The telephone rings sharply. SALLY hastens to answer it.)

Yes, yes. . . . Well, this is Mrs. Pratt speaking . . . *(Eagerly.)*

Oh, is he? Thank you very much, though I didn't mean to get the poor lad out o' bed. . . . *(With a marked change of tone.)*

Oh, Charlie, this is your mother. . . . Are you all right, lad?

. . . *(With great relief.)* Well, I'm glad to hear it. I've been right worried about you. . . . Nay, I don't know. . . . I must be doting. . . . Yes, it's been nice here, except for a bit of a storm late last night. . . . That's good. . . . How many runs did you make? . . . Never mind, better luck next time. . . . Yes, well—look after yourself, Charlie. . . . God bless you, lad! *(She puts down the telephone and gives a great sigh.)* He's all right.

SAM. I didn't expect aught else. How many runs did he make?

SALLY *(half laughing)*. You're as bad as he is. Three.

SAM. Tch! tch! tch! tch!* He will try and hit across, instead o' coming forward—left foot. I've told him.

SALLY. I've been worrying and worrying about that lad all day. Well, that's *one* load off my mind.

SAM. One load? How many more have you?

SALLY. Well, I've this.

(*She produces a rather worn, fairly large notebook, bound in black leather. SAM looks at it in astonishment.*)

SAM. Whose is it?

SALLY. That Doctor Görtler's. I found it in his room this morning. It had slipped down inside the armchair.

SAM. Well, you'll have to send it to him.

SALLY. How can I when he didn't leave his address? And another thing. I feel bad about sending him away like that.

SAM. I told you.

SALLY. I never thought he'd leave last night, without another word. I meant to tell him this morning to stay on, if he wanted to—after what Mr. Ormund said—he'd made me sort o' feel ashamed—and I was right upset when I found he'd gone. I think that started me off.

SAM (*with awkward tenderness*). Never mind, lass. We all make mistakes.

SALLY. But don't think I'm the only one who's feeling upset here. There's some worse than me—yes, here in this house.

SAM. Ay. I've hardly seen 'em to-day.

SALLY. Neither have I. But I know.

(FARRANT's and JANET's voices are heard outside the door. JANET and FARRANT enter, looking very serious.)

SAM (*showing the notebook*). Mr. Farrant. Doctor Görtler left this behind. It had got down side of his chair, way my tobacco-pouch has done monny a time. I was just wondering whether it was of any importance. It's German, I reckon.

FARRANT. I'll see. (*He looks at the first page, curiously.*)

JANET (*very curious*). What does it say?

FARRANT (*puzzling over it*). *Wiederkehr und Dazwischenkunft*. That's Return or Recurrence and—Interference or Interven-

*An exclamation of annoyance.

ACT III] I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

tion. This notebook, it says, is for problems and instances of Recurrence and Intervention. (*He flicks the pages carelessly.*) Yes—— (*He hands it back casually to SAM.*) He's sure to want that back.

JANET (*who has been thinking*). What could he mean by problems and instances of Recurrence and Intervention?

FARRANT (*shrugging*). God knows! But as I've told you before, I don't think Görtler had quite retained his mental balance. It often happens when an elderly scholar suddenly has a lot of trouble. (*He turns, rather sharply, to SALLY.*) Mrs. Pratt, I'm leaving to-night, so can I have my bill, please? And—Sam—would you mind getting my car out?

SAM (*surprised*). All right, Mr. Farrant. (*He goes.*)

FARRANT (*to JANET*). I'll pack now.

(*He goes out. SALLY looks after him in astonishment, then looks at JANET.*)

JANET. Do you know where my husband is, Mrs. Pratt?

SALLY (*gravely*). He was up in his room, Mrs. Ormund. ~~I~~ went in about quarter of an hour since, and he was there, writing letters. (*She breaks off, then, looking hard at JANET, moves a step nearer to her.*) Mrs. Ormund, are you going to-night, as well as Mr. Farrant?

JANET. Yes, we're going together.

SALLY. You're leaving your husband?

JANET. Yes.

SALLY. Leaving him for good?

JANET. Yes.

SALLY (*very earnestly*). But that's a terrible thing to do, Mrs. Ormund.

JANET (*steadily*). I know it's a very serious thing, Mrs. Pratt. But it happens to be the only possible—the only fair thing—to do—in the circumstances. You'll have to believe that.

SALLY. But have you thought, Mrs. Ormund?

JANET (*with a rather wan smile*). I've been doing a lot of thinking.

SALLY. Yes, but I mean—have you thought about what'll happen to Mr. Ormund? He's your husband. And what

will he do, left to himself? He seems such an unhappy sort o' gentleman with all his drinking and what not.

JANET. I'm afraid he is unhappy.

SALLY. You're not leaving him—surely—because he's taken to drinking too much—

JANET. No, Mrs. Pratt. My husband always has been unhappy. There was a time when I tried very hard to make him happy, but somehow I couldn't. It was my fault, not his, probably. I just couldn't feel what I ought to have felt for him. No, it's no use.

SALLY (*very earnestly*). But Mr. Farrant, too! Have you thought what might happen to him—with his school and everything? That's where my Charlie is, you know. And if anything did happen to Mr. Farrant!

JANET (*a trifle less sympathetically*). You can be sure I've thought about that too. We both have.

SALLY. Oh—I knew there was something wrong. Mrs. Ormund, please—I've lost my own man, and I've only this lad of mine—and I'm older than you—listen to me a minute. Don't go snatching at what you think might be happiness, when you don't really know. And please—please—don't rush off and do something you might regret all the rest of your life. We haven't just ourselves to consider, y'know, and the older you get, the more you see that. Mrs. Ormund—please—give yourself a bit more time—think it over—for all our sakes—

(*She is disturbed by the entrance of ORMUND. He is completely sober.*

SALLY gives him one look and then hurries out.)

JANET (*quietly, but not without emotion*). I've just told Mrs. Pratt that Oliver and I are going away.

ORMUND. When?

JANET. We're going to-night.

ORMUND (*hopelessly*). I see.

JANET. It's the fairest and wisest thing to do, Walter—to make a clean break now, so that none of us has any more of this agony.

ORMUND. I've no doubt you're right.

JANET. We've talked it all out. We've faced the worst that

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might happen—even lose the school because of possible scandal.

ORMUND. You mean—you've talked about facing the worst that might happen—you haven't actually faced it yet, y'know.

JANET. Well, we've realized all that this might involve. We're not going away with our eyes closed.

ORMUND. I wonder.

JANET. Why do you say that?

ORMUND. Because I wonder how you know what the worst is that might happen. When we decided to come here together, I thought the worst that could happen would be that we'd have another of our rows. But now something much worse has happened. I'm losing you altogether. You see, we don't know.

JANET (*rather wearily*). I realize that, Walter. I only said that we tried to face the possible consequences.

ORMUND (*looking curiously at her*). You're going away. But you're not happy, are you, Janet?

JANET (*with great sincerity*). No, I'm not. I'm miserable—and rather frightened. And perhaps it's a good thing I am.

ORMUND. Why?

JANET (*very seriously*). Because if I were all excited and feeling gay, I might be doing something foolish going away like this. As it is, I know what I feel for Oliver Farrant is absolutely real—now and for ever. I believe it's always existed, always been part of me.

ORMUND (*rather wearily*). Perhaps it has. Who knows? We know so little that's worth knowing about ourselves. We're like children groping about in the dark.

(FARRANT enters carrying a suitcase, raincoat and hat. He stands stiffly when he sees ORMUND.)

All right, Farrant, all right. Only put that damned gear of yours outside.

FARRANT. My car should be there.

ORMUND. I was asking Janet if she was happy. She says she isn't.

FARRANT (*stiffly*). I didn't suppose she would be.

ORMUND. What about you?

FARRANT. No, of course I'm not. This is a hateful business. If I'd thought my clearing out would settle it, I'd have cleared out. But I knew it wouldn't.

JANET. And I knew it wouldn't. We've talked it all out and we've agreed on that.

ORMUND (*to FARRANT*). You're doing the only possible thing, you feel—

FARRANT. Yes.

ORMUND. You're both deeply in love. I hope I'm not over-stating it.

FARRANT (*curtly*). You're not.

ORMUND. And yet you're feeling miserable about it. Why?

FARRANT (*shrugging*). I suppose it's a bad case of conscience.

ORMUND. Conscience? Come, come.

FARRANT. I believe that a man and woman, feeling as Janet and I do, have a perfect right to do what we're doing. But somewhere at the back of my mind, I've still to contend against centuries of belief that what we're doing is wrong. I'm being worried by my ancestors, as we are all the time. That's about all it is.

JANET (*impulsively*). No, Oliver. I'm sure it isn't that.

FARRANT (*surprised*). Well, what is it, then?

JANET (*struggling with her thought*). I don't know. I wish I did. But there's something—some sort of influence—behind all that we do and say here—something compelling—and tragic—

FARRANT. No, that's simply being fanciful, Janet.

ORMUND (*with savage irony*). No—for God's sake—don't let's be fanciful, not when we live in such a nice, simple, straightforward little world as this.

FARRANT (*with force*). There's no sense in bewildering ourselves with mysteries of our manufacture. People have done that too long. The point is, we're acting rationally and according to our own code, but our so-called consciences were made for us—during childhood—before we could make our own code. Therefore we can know we're doing right and yet still feel, obscurely but quite strongly, that we're doing wrong. And that's what's the matter with us.

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ORMUND. And I don't believe that's the half of it, Farrant. It's all too damn simple, like a lot of your explanations.

FARRANT. But perhaps things are really much simpler than you like to think they are.

ORMUND. I suspect they're even more complicated than I think they are. (*Going nearer to FARRANT, with a marked change of tone.*) I don't suppose I'll ever see you again, Farrant. Let me give you one last word. Don't be too sure you know it all. Don't think you've got it all worked out. You bright young men, with your outlines of everything, are going to be horribly surprised yet. No. Another word and I've finished. Don't think you know it all, and she knows nothing. She knows more about what's going on in this crazy universe than you or I do. She doesn't get it out of books, because it isn't in books. But she can guess right, now and then, and we can't.

FARRANT. But you're not going to blame me for preferring knowledge and judgment to guesswork?

ORMUND. No, but I'm not going to have you gassing about knowledge and judgment when you can't really account for a single thing that's happened to you these last two days. You can give us nice, bright, simple outlines of everything under the sun, but the minute something really important happens to you, you can't make head or tail of it, and wonder if you're going mad.

JANET (*urgently*). That's true, at least, Oliver. You know we're all equally bewildered. And there's something more—something that hasn't been accounted for yet—something that perhaps can never be explained—like so many things—

(*She breaks off, and looks across to the doorway. ORMUND and FARRANT look too. It has rapidly been growing dimmer in the room. DR. GÖRTLER's figure—he does not wear a hat or carry a bag—stands very dark in the doorway.*)

ORMUND. It's Görtler.

DR. GÖRTLER (*at the door*). Yes. It is dark in here.

(ORMUND turns on the light. DR. GÖRTLER comes forward, gives a little bow to the three of them rather casually.)

Thank you. But I am not staying—

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ORMUND (*gravely*). Just a minute, Doctor. (*Goes and calls.*)
Mrs. Pratt, Mrs. Pratt.

SALLY (*off*). Just coming, Mr. Ormund.

ORMUND (*to DR. GÖRTLER*). You see, you didn't give us a chance last night to say how sorry we were that you—a stranger, an exile in this country—had been treated with such discourtesy.

(SALLY *appears*.)

Mrs. Pratt, I'm apologizing to Doctor Görtler.

SALLY (*speaking humbly and with feeling*). Yes, Doctor Görtler, I want to beg your pardon. I shouldn't have asked you to leave. You'd done nothing wrong. I was blaming you just because you're a foreigner. I'm sorry.

DR. GÖRTLER (*rather embarrassed and touched*). No, please, please. I lost my temper too—that has always been my trouble—a bad temper—and so I behaved foolishly.

SALLY. I hope you'll stay, now you've come back.

DR. GÖRTLER. No, I cannot do that. I only came back because I have lost something—something very important—and I am hoping that I may have left it here——

SALLY (*holding up the notebook*). Is this it?

DR. GÖRTLER (*taking it eagerly*). Yes. Thank you. That is all I want.

(*He glances at the notebook, then looks up at SALLY, and gives her a smiling nod of dismissal. She looks at him hesitantly, then turns and goes.*)

I would not like to have lost this. There is a great deal of valuable work here. (*He turns, smiling, and makes a move in the direction of the door.*)

ORMUND (*stopping him*). Görtler! You're not going?

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes. Why not?

(*He looks at ORMUND. ORMUND looks from him to the other two.*)

JANET (*impulsively*). Doctor Görtler, you know something, don't you? Something that we don't know.

FARRANT (*quietly*). That's quite impossible, y'know, Janet.

ORMUND. Is it though? I'm not so sure.

JANET (*to DR. GÖRTLER*). You know, don't you?

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FARRANT (*protesting*). Janet, really it's—

JANET (*cutting him short*). Please, Oliver! (*To DR. GÖRTLER.*) You believe that something happened here before, don't you?

DR. GÖRTLER. I know it did.

FARRANT. How could it, seeing that not one of us has ever been here before?

DR. GÖRTLER. Are you sure you haven't?

FARRANT (*very decidedly*). Of course I am. I'm quite capable of remembering exactly where I've been.

DR. GÖRTLER. Then there is nothing more to be said.

JANET. Yes, there is. Please! What do you know about us?

FARRANT. Wait a minute, Janet. We can't possibly drag Doctor Görtler into our private affairs.

DR. GÖRTLER. I have no wish to be dragged into them. (*He looks at him with a slight smile.*) Have you and Mrs. Ormund planned to leave here to-night together?

FARRANT. How did you guess?

DR. GÖRTLER. It is not guessing.

ORMUND. Görtler, I don't blame you for losing your temper. You were badly treated. But we've apologized. And things are serious here now—

DR. GÖRTLER (*coolly*). They always were—*very* serious.

ORMUND. All right, then. Now—the truth, as simply as you can state it, please. You had some definite purpose in coming here, hadn't you?

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes.

ORMUND. What was it?

DR. GÖRTLER. I came to verify an experiment, and, if possible, to make a further experiment.

ORMUND. But you didn't do anything?

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes. Everything happened as I thought it would. I verified my experiment. But then, last night, I suddenly lost patience, because I felt I was being badly treated, so I did not try the further experiment. That does not matter very much. I can try that other experiment with some other example.

JANET (*urgently*). Doctor Görtler, you mean it doesn't matter to you or to your theory or whatever it is. But what about us?

FARRANT (*impatiently*). How *can* it matter to us, Janet?

(DR. GÖRTLER *looks at them indifferently*. *There is a pause.*)

ORMUND (*very forcefully*). Doctor Görtler, last night you asked me a good many unusual questions—you remember?—and I told you things I had never told anybody else—

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes, that is true. You were very helpful, Mr. Ormund.

ORMUND. Now I am asking you something. It is your turn to be helpful. Why did you come to this inn? What was this experiment of yours?

DR. GÖRTLER (*after a short pause*). Very well. (*He pauses, then begins in the brisk impersonal tone of the scientist.*) In this notebook are some records of very unusual states of mind and feats of memory. Some of them came to me like clear dreams. They are quite vivid little scenes.

(*He rapidly turns the pages of the notebook to a place he wants, then glances at it.*)

In the best of them, I remember not only what I have seen, but also what has been said. I was fortunate enough to have a very good example about three months ago. I put down all the details here (*Looks at the notebook a moment, then at his listeners.*) In this memory—this dream if you prefer it—I found myself a year or two older than I am now, but situated as I am now, an exile living in London. I was in rooms—cheap rooms not unlike those I am in now—but here the rooms above mine, very poor rooms, were occupied by two people, a man and his wife, still quite young, but very shabby, very poor, and very unhappy. They had been quarrelling bitterly and I had heard them, and because I was sorry, I went up to see what I could do. Then, I learned their history.

(*He stops. JANET stirs and draws a sharp breath.*)

This was not the woman's first husband. She had been the wife of a rich man, older than herself, with whom she had fallen out of love. But they had gone on a little holiday together, at Whitsuntide, to a small inn, which they described. There she had instantly fallen in love with a younger man—the one now her husband—and they had run away.

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(*He pauses.* JANET *draws a sharp breath again and looks at FARRANT.*
He shakes his head impatiently.)

JANET. Doctor Görtler—

DR. GÖRTLER. Then there came, out of this, as they now realized, the ruin of many innocent lives. A great business collapsed, and many people, simple people—like this landlord and his daughter here—lost their money. Not only that, but there had been a great scandal, so that this young man had been driven out of his profession, and both of them had to endure poverty and loneliness. But what made them so bitter was that though their love for one another had compelled them to take this course, had made them poor and lonely and neglected, it had given them nothing in return. This love of theirs, it had died.

JANET (*very sharply, painfully*). No, it couldn't have done that.

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes. They admitted that. There were too many shadows between them, too many reproachful faces. They could no longer be happy together, yet they could not be indifferent to one another, having suffered so much, so now they were quarrelsome, bitter—

JANET (*with a heartbroken cry*). Oh—God—no—not that—

FARRANT (*angrily*). But—Janet—

JANET. It was us he saw, Oliver, of course it was us.

FARRANT (*angrily*). It's only some fantastic dream of his.

JANET. No. You recognized us here, didn't you?

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes. At once.

JANET (*to FARRANT*). You see, I knew all the time there was something—

FARRANT (*almost savagely*). Wait a minute. (*Turning on DR. GÖRTLER.*) How did you induce these dreams of yours?

DR. GÖRTLER. They weren't dreams. They were actual memories.

FARRANT. Memories of what?

DR. GÖRTLER. Of past cycles of my own life.

FARRANT. You're contradicting yourself—on your own ridiculous theory. You said you were then as you are now, an exile living in London.

DR. GÖRTLER. Why not? I have been an exile in London

in past cycles of my life. We repeat our lives, with some differences, over and over again.

FARRANT. You can't expect us to believe that.

DR. GÖRTLER. My friend, I do not care whether you believe it or not. You asked me to explain, and I am explaining.

FARRANT. Yes, but you're not merely airing a fantastic theory now, you're interfering in our affairs. How did you induce these states of mind?

DR. GÖRTLER. By a certain method I have developed. We have to change the focus of attention, which we have trained ourselves to concentrate on the present. My problem was to drift away from the present—as we do in dreams—and yet be attentive, noticing everything—

FARRANT (*with savage intensity*). Yes, yes, but how did you do it? By doing without food, I suppose?

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes, to some extent.

FARRANT. I thought so. And did you use drugs?

DR. GÖRTLER. A German colleague found a certain narcotic for me—

FARRANT (*triumphantly to JANET*). I knew it. You see. I suspected that all along. He's starved himself and drugged himself and let himself be hag-ridden by a completely illogical, fantastic theory of life, and then comes here with a story of some ridiculous dream he had—

ORMUND (*cutting in, quietly but sharply*). Then what are we all doing, playing such convincing parts in it?

(*There is a silence. ORMUND moves nearer the door.*)

DR. GÖRTLER (*quietly*). I expected this. But it was you who asked me to explain. I have given you my explanation.

JANET (*with a sort of quiet despair*). I believe it's true.

FARRANT (*angry and resentful*). Janet, you can't.

JANET. Yes. It accounts for so many things. (*To DR. GÖRTLER.*) But afterwards—when you had made your notes—?

DR. GÖRTLER. That was three months ago. I soon found that these things had not yet happened in this cycle of your lives—because I discovered at once that Mr. Oliver Farrant was still the headmaster of Lamberton School—

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JANET. You had our *names*?

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes, of course.

FARRANT. What proof have we of that?

DR. GÖRTLER. I think you read German? My handwriting is not good, but you can read enough, I hope, to convince you. (*He hands over the notebook, open, to FARRANT, who takes it and stares in amazement. ORMUND, after watching FARRANT's face a moment, slips out quietly.*)

You will see I had not the actual name of the inn—only an idea of the sort of place it was and its situation among these hills.

FARRANT. I don't understand this. Must be some sort of clairvoyance, clairaudience. I believe there are instances——

(*DR. GÖRTLER shakes his head, with a little smile.*)

DR. GÖRTLER. So I came here for this Whitsuntide holiday. At first, when two of you were not even expected here, I thought I had chosen the wrong year. But no. I was fortunate.

JANET. That's why—you asked those questions——?

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes. I also found that you were all closely interdependent. And I saw also that two of you were so instantly and fatally attracted that you were superficially resentful of one another. (*He smiles.*) It was like watching a performance of a play that one has first read carefully.

JANET (*wildly*). You're talking as if we were marionettes with no minds and wills of our own.

FARRANT (*resentfully*). Going round and round. It's a monstrous, hellish theory.

DR. GÖRTLER. Yet—what have you felt these last two days? Have you felt you had minds and wills of your own?

JANET. No. (*Then with a sort of despairing energy.*) But—Doctor Görtler—we're not really like that. I know—I *know* we're not. We *can* make our own lives, can't we?

DR. GÖRTLER. Once we know, yes. It is knowledge alone that gives us freedom. I believe that the very grooves in which our lives run are created by our feeling, imagination and will. If we know and then make the effort, we can change our lives. We are not going round and round in hell. And we can help each other.

JANET. How?

DR. GÖRTLER. If I have more knowledge than you, then I can intervene, like a man who stops you on a journey to tell you that the road ahead is flooded. That was the further experiment I had hoped to make. To intervene.

JANET (*pointing to the notebook*). Recurrence and Intervention.

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes. That seemed possible too. I discovered some things I did not know before. Two of you, troubled by memories, were instantly attracted to each other. That I expected. But the third—

JANET. You mean Walter?

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes. The one I had not met before. I soon discovered that he was a man who felt he had a tragic destiny and was moving nearer and nearer to self-destruction—

JANET (*startled*). Suicide!

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes, that was why the great business collapsed, why so many were ruined, why everybody knew the story. You told me when you left him, ran away, your husband went into the garage here and shot himself—

JANET (*looking round*). Walter! (*She sees he is not there.*) Where did he go?

FARRANT (*rising and pointing to the door*). Not that way.

JANET (*urgently*). Doctor Görtler, he keeps a revolver in one of the pockets of his car. Will you go and get it for me, please?

DR. GÖRTLER (*gravely*). Yes, that would be better. (*He moves towards the door, opens it and then turns.*) That is one thing to do, but there are others, more important.

JANET (*quietly*). Yes, I understand.

(DR. GÖRTLER goes out. FARRANT turns eagerly to JANET.)

FARRANT (*with passion*). Janet—you're not going to let that fantastic stuff of his make any difference to us?

JANET (*urgently*). But—you see, Oliver, I believe it. It explains so many things I couldn't understand before. It explains us—why it's all happened so quickly between us. And it explains why I've never felt happy about it, why there's been a great shadow over it all. (*Pauses, then announces quietly*). So you must go. But I must stay.

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FARRANT. Janet, if you'd told me to go last night, I'd have gone without a word. But after what we've said to one another to-day, I can't go without you. I *can't*.

JANET. You must, Oliver.

FARRANT (*pleading*). But nothing's been really changed. We're exactly the same people that we were an hour ago. If it was impossible for you to stay here with Ormund then, it's impossible now. We still feel the same about each other. Can't you see, Janet, everything's just the same?

JANET (*distressed*). No it isn't, because now we know more.

FARRANT. We know nothing. My God, Janet, you're not going back on everything we've said, everything we've planned, because of this old German's mystical rubbish?

JANET. Oh—my dear—I must. I feel it's true—here—
(*She puts a hand over her heart.*) Just as I feel the truth of my love and yours.

FARRANT. But now it means tearing our lives in two.

JANET. But it's better to do that than tear so many other people's lives in two—only to find in the end we'd lost one another. And this can't be for ever, you know.

FARRANT (*bitterly*). It can for me. I happen to know I've only one life, not dozens of 'em like the rest of you. Only one, and now it's in bits—
(*Almost breaking down.*) Oh—Janet—and you'll do nothing to mend it—
(*This is almost inaudible.*)

JANET (*very quietly*). No, my dear, if this wasn't the beginning, then this can't be the end of it all.
(*She kneels beside him.*) There must be somewhere—our own place, our own time.
(*Taking his face between her hands.*) Let me look at you.

FARRANT (*almost mumbling*). Why? What does it matter now?

JANET. I'm trying to make myself remember every single line of your face. And I know I shan't. Very soon I shall try to see it again, and there'll be nothing but a blur while hundreds of faces that mean nothing will come between us. It's a hard world for love, Oliver. Even the memory of its face won't stay to comfort us.

(*DR. GÖRTLER enters. JANET and OLIVER are now apart again.*)

DR. GÖRTLER. The revolver is not there now. And it was there yesterday.

JANET (*hurriedly*). Will you please find my husband—tell him I am saying good-bye to Oliver—and stay with him until I come in again? Oliver—

(DR. GÖRTLER *watches* FARRANT and JANET *go through the door*.
When they have gone he calls.)

DR. GÖRTLER. Ormund. Ormund.

(ORMUND *enters, looking rather wild.*)

ORMUND. Where are they?

DR. GÖRTLER. Out there—but they are saying good-bye.

ORMUND. Good-bye?

DR. GÖRTLER. He is going. She will stay with you. She sent me to find your revolver, but it was not there.

ORMUND. No, because it's here. (*He pulls it out of his pocket.*)

DR. GÖRTLER. It would be better to give that to me.

ORMUND. If I'd any sense, I'd use it. No more questions that can't be answered, twisting like knives in your guts. Sleep, a good sleep, the only good sleep.

DR. GÖRTLER. I am afraid you will be disappointed. It will be a sleep full of dreams—like this. And the questions will be still there. You cannot blow them to bits with a pistol. But why should you want to try now? It is all different.

ORMUND. I don't see any difference.

DR. GÖRTLER. Your wife will not leave you now. And perhaps she will be changed a little—with a new kindness.

ORMUND. I don't want her kindness. Let her go.

DR. GÖRTLER. But now she does not want to go.

ORMUND. Yes, she does. But she's afraid to. And I've lost her, whether she goes or stays, so there's no difference. She can't keep me alive simply by staying by my side.

DR. GÖRTLER. No one can keep you alive but yourself.

ORMUND. And I don't want to go on living.

DR. GÖRTLER (*dryly*). I am not going to cry over you, my friend.

ORMUND (*angrily*). Who the devil asked you to?

DR. GÖRTLER. But I must remind you—there's no escape.

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ORMUND. No? I suppose because you believe that if I take the jump into the dark, I'll find myself back again on the old treadmill. Well, I don't believe it. I can find peace.

DR. GÖRTLER. You can't. Peace is not somewhere just waiting for you.

ORMUND. Where is it, then?

DR. GÖRTLER. You have to create it.

ORMUND. How could I? You've some idea of what's gone on in my head these last twenty years. Where's the peace coming from?

DR. GÖRTLER (*sternly*). If you must talk and act like a child, then at least be as humble as a child. If you cannot create your own peace, then pray for it. Go down on your knees and ask for it. If you have no knowledge, then have faith.

ORMUND. Faith in what? Fairy tales?

DR. GÖRTLER (*with authority and passion*). Yes, my friend—if you will—in fairy tales.

ORMUND. I've lived too long—and thought too much—to begin now——

DR. GÖRTLER (*with great authority*). I have lived longer than you. I have thought more, and I have suffered more. And I tell you there is more truth to the fundamental nature of things in the most foolish fairy tales than there is in any of your complaints against life.

ORMUND. Rubbish! Why?

DR. GÖRTLER. Because all events are shaped in the end by magic——

ORMUND (*scornfully*). Yes, I thought we'd come to that. Magic!

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes. The creative magic of our feeling, imagination and will. These are the realities—our feeling, imagination and will—and all our histories are their dreams.

ORMUND. All very easy!

DR. GÖRTLER (*with passion*). It is not easy. Life is not easy. It provides no short cuts, no effortless escapes. Peace and ecstasy are not laid on like hot and cold water.

ORMUND (*with savage irony*). You needn't tell me that. I know it.

DR. GÖRTLER. Yes, but you do not know—you will not understand—that life is penetrated through and through by our feeling, imagination and will. In the end the whole universe must respond to every real effort we make. We each live a fairy tale created by ourselves.

ORMUND. What—by going round and round the same damned dreary circle of existence, as you believe?

DR. GÖRTLER. We do not go round a circle. That is an illusion, just as the circling of the planets and stars is an illusion. We move along a spiral track. It is not quite the same journey from the cradle to the grave each time. Sometimes the differences are small, sometimes they are very important. We must set out each time on the same road, but along that road we have a choice of adventures.

ORMUND. I wish I could believe that, Görtler.

DR. GÖRTLER. What has happened before—many times perhaps—will probably happen again. That is why some people can prophesy what is to happen. They do not see the future, as they think, but the past, what has happened before. But something new may happen. You may have brought your wife here for this holiday over and over again. She may have met Farrant here over and over again. But you and I have not talked here before. This is new. This may be one of those great moments of our lives.

ORMUND. And which are they?

DR. GÖRTLER (*impressively*). When a soul can make a fateful decision. I see this as such a moment for you, Ormund. You can return to the old dark circle of existence, dying endless deaths, or you can break the spell and swing out into new life.

ORMUND (*after a pause—staring at DR. GÖRTLER, then with a certain breadth and nobility of manner*). New life! I wish I could believe that. They've never told me yet about a God so generous and noble and wise that He won't allow a few decisions that we make in our ignorance, haste and bewilderment to settle our fate for ever. Why should this poor improvisation be our whole existence? Why should this great theatre of suns and moons and starlight have been created for the first pitiful charade we can contrive?

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DR. GÖRTLER. It was not. We must play our parts until the drama is perfect.

ORMUND (*very slowly*). I think what I've resented most is that the only wisdom we have is wisdom after the event. We learn, but always too late. When I was no longer a boy, I knew at last what sort of boy I ought to have been. By the time we are forty, we know how to behave at twenty. Always too late. So that the little wisdom we get is useless to us.

DR. GÖRTLER (*very quietly*). In your world. Not in mine.

(ORMUND stands erect, but with his head bowed for a moment. DR.

GÖRTLER watches him in silence, without moving. Finally

ORMUND slips the revolver into his pocket and looks up, obviously having arrived at decision.)

Well?

ORMUND (*very quietly*).[¶] At least we can improve on this Whitsuntide drama of yours. I'll live. (*Pauses.*) But on nobody's self-sacrifice. Ask my wife to come in here for a moment. And please tell Farrant to stop out there.

(DR. GÖRTLER nods and goes out. ORMUND takes out the revolver and begins unloading it, then pockets it as JANET slowly enters and looks anxiously at him.)

JANET (*quietly*). I was just saying good-bye to Oliver.

ORMUND. Yes.

JANET. You understand—I'm not leaving you now.

ORMUND. You love him. He loves you. You are certain of that?

JANET. Yes, absolutely certain.

(*He looks at her gravely for a moment, turns away restlessly, then swings round, almost savagely.*)

ORMUND. Go on, then. Go with him.

JANET (*suddenly lighting up with great hope*). Walter! (*Then she realizes it could not work, and the eagerness and light go.*) I couldn't—you see—not now when I know—

ORMUND (*harshly*). You don't know. How could you?

JANET. Doctor Görtler said—

ORMUND (*cutting in sharply*). These are our lives, not his.

Go, I tell you. There'll be no suicide, no scandal, no disasters. Everything'll go on. You can depend on me.

JANET (*with growing excitement and eagerness*). Oh—Walter—are you sure? If only I could——

ORMUND (*with a touch of impatience*). I tell you it's all right. Farrant's only got to take you away now for a little time, perhaps abroad, and then go quietly back to his work. And whatever happens I'll see he's not howled out of his school.

JANET (*she is radiant now, and speaks confusedly*). Walter—I can't—is it really true?—oh, I can't talk—I'm too happy——

ORMUND (*with a touch of bitterness*). Yes, I never remember seeing you so happy before.

JANET (*eagerly*). It's not just for myself—or even for Oliver—but for you too, Walter. You've changed everything now.

ORMUND (*with a slight effort*). All right, keep on being happy, then, Janet. You were meant to be happy, to be radiant. I always wanted you to be—but somehow it didn't work. Now—it seems—it's working.

JANET (*looking at him, then speaking slowly and with great affection*). Walter—something tremendous has happened to you——

ORMUND. I wonder. (*He looks at her, then slowly smiles.*)

JANET. Yes. You're suddenly quite different. And yet—as you always ought to have been. I know now—you're bigger than I am—bigger than Oliver. I think—now—you'll be a great man, Walter.

ORMUND. Not a chance. I'll never be a great man. There aren't many of them, and you have to stand a long way off to see their true size. No, Janet, perhaps I'm at last—a man—a real man—and not a mere bundle of fears and self-indulgences.

JANET. That's not how I shall think of you. What will you do now?

ORMUND. Stay here to-night, probably to-morrow night too. And try and think. I've never done much real thinking. I've always been afraid to.

(SALLY enters hesitantly and anxiously. ORMUND turns and sees her.)

Oh—Mrs. Pratt—ask Sam to put Mrs. Ormund's things in the car outside.

ACT III] I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

SALLY. Your car?

ORMUND. No, Mr. Farrant's. (*As she stops and looks troubled and anxious, he adds gently.*) Everything will be all right, Mrs. Pratt. And stop worrying about that boy of yours. He'll have his chance. Nobody's going to let you down.

SALLY (*relieved*). Thank you, Mr. Ormund.

(*She goes out.*)

ORMUND (*quietly*). I'll say good-bye now, Janet. I won't come out.

JANET. There seem to be a thousand things I want to say now, Walter.

ORMUND. Then don't forget them. Because some day, soon, I want to hear them.

(DR. GÖRTLER *appears at the door.*)

Good-bye, Janet. Keep on being happy.

(*He holds out a hand, but as she takes it she moves forward and kisses him.*)

JANET (*whispering*). Dear Walter—good-bye—God bless you!
(*She hurries out, DR. GÖRTLER holding the door open for her. ORMUND watches her go. There is a slight pause after she has gone.*)

ORMUND (*very quietly*). Close that door, Doctor.

DR. GÖRTLER (*after closing the door*). I, too, must be going now.

ORMUND (*with a slight smile*). Having concluded the experiment. (*After a pause.*) I am still wondering whether I believe a word of it.

DR. GÖRTLER. It is very difficult at first, like all new knowledge. (*He is staring curiously at ORMUND.*)

ORMUND. You look at me as a doctor looks at his patient.

DR. GÖRTLER (*calmly*). Yes, because if my theory is correct, you are now in the unusual and interesting position of a man who is moving out on a new time track, like a man who is suddenly born into a strange new world—

ORMUND (*raising his hand as the sound of FARRANT's car going off is heard*). Just a minute, Doctor.

I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE [ACT III]

(*They listen a moment until the sound of the car dies away—ORMUND listening with a painful intensity.*)

Like a man who's suddenly born into a strange new world, eh? Well, that's not altogether fanciful, Görtler. I feel rather like a new-born creature. Rather cold, small, lonely. (*He shivers a little.*)

DR. GÖRTLER (*with a little smile*). Yes, it may be hard at first. But it will pass. There are a million suns waiting to keep you warm and to light your way.

(*He goes towards the door. ORMUND follows him slowly.*)

Perhaps we shall meet again. So I will say *Auf Wiedersehn*.

ORMUND. Yes, we'll meet again. Good-bye.

(*They shake hands. DR. GÖRTLER goes, and ORMUND stands at the door looking out into the night, which faintly lights him with moonlight. As he stands there, he mechanically brings out his pipe and pouch and begins to fill the pipe. SAM enters hesitantly—pipe in hand—and looks doubtfully and sympathetically across at ORMUND. As he clears his throat, ORMUND turns and sees him and comes into the room, closing the door behind him.*)

Well, Sam?

SAM (*with awkward kindness*). I just wondered—like—Mr. Ormund—whether there might be aught I could do for you—like—

ORMUND. Well, you can sit down and smoke your pipe, Sam.

SAM. Ay.

(*Both men sit, they light their pipes, and smoke slowly.*)

I hear them shepherds t'other side o' Grindle Top's been having a bit o' bother.

ORMUND (*slowly*). Yes, I heard something about that, Sam.

SAM (*slowly, philosophically*). Folks thinks shepherds have a quiet life, but they have their bits o' bother, them chaps, like anybody else.

ORMUND. Yes, I suppose they do, Sam.

They are smoking away companionably, in silence, as—

The CURTAIN slowly falls.

Thane



GLOSSARY

The glossary contains those words that appear in this book but were not used in *Essential English* (Books I-IV). The definitions given are for the meanings of the words as they are used in this book; they do not necessarily cover all meanings of the word. The definitions are within the vocabulary of *Essential English* (Books I-IV).

accent ['æksənt] = style of pronunciation.
 accumulation [ækju:mju'leɪʃn] = gathering together.
 adult ['ædʌlt] = grown up.
 alert [ə'lɜ:t] = quick, watchful.
 alternate ['ɔ:ltəneɪt] = vary; go from one to another.
 amazement [ə'meɪzmənt] = astonishment.
 anniversary [æni'vɜ:səri] = the day or year in which an event is celebrated.
 anti-knock (petrol) ['ænti'nɒk] = good petrol that prevents "knocking" in the engine.
 apron ['eɪprən] = piece of cloth worn in front to protect the clothes.
 assurance [ə'ʃʊərəns] = self-confidence.
 Atlas ['ætɪəs] = Greek god who was supposed to bear the world on his shoulders.

back-word ['bæk wɜ:d] = message saying someone doesn't want to keep to the arrangement made.
 baffled ['bæfɪd] = defeated, prevented from doing something.
 bait [beɪt] = material used to tempt an animal into a trap.
 bewilder [bi'wɪldə] = puzzle.
 blast [blɔ:st] = power.
 bog [bɒg] = wet, marshy ground.
 (in) bond [bɒnd] = kept by the Government officials.
 bosh [bɒʃ] = rubbish (*colloquial*).
 brusque [brʌsk] = short, rather bad-mannered.
 brute [bru:t] = animal.
 bully ['buli] = to treat tyrannically and cruelly.
 bureau ['bjʊərəu] = desk.
 burlesque [bɜ:'lesk] = comic exaggeration.
 bustle ['bʌsl] = to hurry, making a show of busy activity.
 byre ['baɪə] = cow shed.

cancer ['kænsə] = painful illness caused by diseased growth in the body.
 casually ['kæzjuəli] = carelessly, without interest.
 charade [ʃə'reɪd] = game in which a word is acted bit by bit and the onlookers try to guess what it is.
 chime [tʃaɪm] = strike with three or four musical notes.
 chuckle ['tʃʌkl] = low quiet laugh.

GLOSSARY

- clairaudience [kleər'ɔ:diəns] = power of hearing things not present to the senses.
- clairvoyance [kleə'vɔ:əns] = power of seeing things not present to the senses.
- code [kəʊd] = system of rules.
- coincidence [kou'insidiəns] = chance happening of two things in a way that seems to suggest they are connected.
- colleague ['kɒli:g] = fellow-worker.
- commotion [kə'məʊʃn] = noise, disturbance.
- concentrate ['kɒnsəntreɪt] = fix one's mind and attention intently.
- consequences ['kɒnsɪkwənsɪz] = results of an action.
- contempt [kən'tempt] = scorn.
- conventionally [kən'venʃənəli] = as generally understood.
- convincing [kən'vɪnsɪŋ] = impressing with their truth.
- cordially ['kɔ:diəli] = heartily.
- corrupt [kə'rʌpt] = evil.
- cradle ['kreɪdl] = baby's bed that can be rocked from side to side.
- crazy ['kreɪzi] = mad.
- curlew ['kɜ:lju:] = a kind of bird.
- curt [kɜ:t] = short, sharp.
- cycle ['saɪkl] = a period of time in which a number of events are completed before beginning to repeat themselves in the same order.
- dazed ['deɪzd] = stupefied, made half-unconscious as by a blow or shock.
- deliberately [di'libərətli] = carefully and emphatically.
- depressed [di'prest] = low-spirited.
- deposit [di'pɒzɪt] = part payment as guarantee.
- desert [di'zɜ:t] = leave.
- detached [di'tætʃt] = impersonal; not moved by external influences.
- diffidence ['dɪfɪdəns] = shyness, lack of self-confidence.
- dignity ['dɪgnɪti] = nobility of manner.
- dimension [daɪ'menʃən] = shape, form.
- distillery [dis'tɪləri] = place where whisky is made.
- distressed [dis'trest] = upset, unhappy.
- dizzy ['dɪzi] = feeling as if everything is turning round.
- dobby-horse ['dɒbi hɔ:s] = wooden horse in the "merry-go-rounds" at a fair.
- dodge [dɒdʒ] = avoid.
- dogmatic [dɒg'mætɪk] = emphatic in expressing opinion.
- don [dɒn] = Fellow or tutor (= teacher) at an Oxford or Cambridge college.
- doting ['dɒtɪŋ] = foolishly loving.
- dotty ['dɒti] = mad (*colloquial*).
- dreary ['driəri] = dull, uninspired.
- drift [drɪft] = float without effort.
- droll [drəʊl] = comic.
- drug [drʌg] = medicinal substance.
- dubiously ['dju:biəsli] = unwillingly, doubtful about his ability.
- dwindling ['dwɪndlɪŋ] = going less and less.
- ecstasy ['ekstəsi] = great joy (*adj.*, ecstatic ['eks'tætɪk]).
- (on) edge [edʒ] = nervy.

GLOSSARY

- embrace [im'breis] = to hold in one's arms.
 emphasise ['emfəsaiz] = say forcibly.
 exhausted [ig'zɔ:stid] = tired out.
 exile ['eksail] = a person driven out of his own country.
 fagged ['fægd] = tired out.
 fantastic [fæn'tæstik] = wildly imaginative.
 feat [fi:t] = act, performance.
 flick [flik] = turn over quickly.
 focus ['foukəs] of attention = point to which attention is directed.
 forlornly [fə'lɔ:nli] = sadly, rather pathetically.
 fragile ['frædʒail] = delicate.
 fraud [frɔ:d] = someone pretending to be what he is not.
 frown [fraun] = an angry expression of the face made by the lines between and above the eyes.
 fundamental [fandə'mentl] = real, essential.
 fusel oil ['fju:zəl oil] = oily liquid with unpleasant taste found in badly distilled whisky.
 fuss [fas] = worry.
 gassing ['gæsiŋ] = talking foolishly (*slang*).
 gear [giə] = luggage.
 geometry [dʒi'ɒmitri] = the science of the relations of lines, planes, and solids in space.
 get someone's back up = to rouse someone's hostility.
 glen [glen] = valley.
 gloomy ['glu:mi] = low-spirited, unhappy, miserable.
 groove [gru:v] = deep line cut in wood, etc.
 grope [gru:p] = feel blindly.
 grumble ['græmbəl] = complain, express dissatisfaction or discontent.
 gust [gast] = sudden burst (generally of wind).
 guts [gats] = stomach, etc. (*rather colloquial*).
 hag-ridden ['hæg ridn] = troubled by foolish or evil ideas.
 harebells ['hæəbelz] = blue or white bell-like flowers.
 hellish ['heliʃ] = evil.
 high-brow ['hai brau] = belonging to a superior intelligence.
 horoscope ['hɒrəskəup] = observation of the position of stars at a person's birth with a view to reading his future.
 howl [haul] = shout contemptuously.
 humming ['hæmiŋ] = noisily busy.
 identical [ai'dentikl] = exactly the same.
 illusion [i'lju:ʒən] = false, mistaken idea.
 impertinent [im'pɜ:tinənt] = disrespectful, bad-mannered.
 impudence ['impjədəns] = rudeness.
 incredulous [in'kredjələs] = unable to believe.
 indifference [in'diferəns] = lack of interest.
 induce [in'dju:s] = bring on.
 inquisitive [in'kwizitiv] = asking questions about what does not concern one.
 instinct ['instɪŋkt] = unconscious idea ; unreasoned feeling.
 institution [insti'tju:ʃn] = something set up.

GLOSSARY

- intellectual [inti'lektjuəl] = thoughtful.
 interdependent [intədi'pendənt] = dependent on one another.
 intervention [inta'venfən] = coming between.
 irony ['aiərəni] = a form of speech in which one says the opposite of what one means.
 inevitability [inevita'biliti] = quality of being unavoidable or inescapable.
 jazz [dʒæz] = noisy, inharmonious, modern dance music.
 jerkily ['dʒɜ:kili] = not smoothly.
 limp [limp] = walk as if one's foot or leg was stiff or injured.
 link [liŋk] = join.
 loathsome ['louðsəm] = horrible.
 lunacy ['lu:nəsi] = madness.
 malicious [mə'liʃəs] = spiteful.
 marionettes [məriə'nets] = figures cut in wood and worked by strings in the theatre.
 mathematics [mæθi'mætiks] = the science of numbers and space.
 mischievously ['mistʃivəsli] = with quiet but rather sharp fun.
 monstrously ['mɒnstɹəsli] = vastly, unnaturally, hatefully.
 muddle ['mʌdl] = mess, trouble.
 mumble ['mʌmbl] = speak low, not clearly.
 murmur ['mɜ:mə] = low sound.
 mutual ['mju:tʃuəl] = felt by one or more people for each other.
 mystical ['mistikl] = having direct knowledge of spiritual mysteries.
 narcotic [nɑ:'kɒtik] = drug causing sleep.
 nibble ['nibl] = little bite.
 nip [nip] = hurry, go quickly (*slang*).
 nod [nɒd] = move the head sharply forward as a sign of agreement.
 obscure [əb'skjuə] = hidden.
 obvious ['ɒbvɪəs] = plain to see.
 off-handed ['ɒf'hændɪd] = careless, uninterested.
 orator ['ɒrəteɪ] = public speaker.
 ordnance (map) ['ɔ:dnəns] = large-scale map made by Government
Ordnance Survey Department.
 packet (has had a) = lot of trouble (*slang*).
 pedagogic [pedə'gɒdʒɪk] = in the manner of a schoolmaster.
 perch [pɜ:tʃ] = seat, in a high place.
 penetrate ['penitreit] = pierce.
 peremptorily [pə'remptərɪli] = in a commanding manner.
 philosopher [fɪl'ɒsəfə] = a student of wisdom and knowledge.
 pickle ['pɪkl] = to preserve in spirits.
 planet ['plænit] = star moving round the sun.
 plead [pli:d] = beg.
 pop [pɒp] = (1) put quickly ; (2) shot.
 pound [paʊnd] = place where lost animals were put.
 prig [prɪg] = a person too self-satisfied with his own moral or intellectual superiority.

GLOSSARY

- profound [prə'faund] = deep.
 prompt [prɒmpt] = suggest what to say.
 prophetic [prə'fetik] = like a prophet (i.e. one who reads the future);
 (*verb*, prophesy ['prɒfisaɪ]).
 psycho-analyst ['saɪkəʊ 'ænəlist] = one who studies the mind by
 considering it as expressing a conflict between the conscious will
 and the unconscious impressions.
 puppet ['pʌpɪt] = marionette (*q.v.*).
 rack [ræk] = former instrument of torture.
 radiant ['reɪdiənt] = shining with happiness.
 rationally ['ræʃənəli] = reasonably.
 rebuke [ri'buːk] = blame for a fault.
 recurrence [ri'kərəns] = coming again.
 refuge ['refjuːdʒ] = protection, shelter, place of safety.
 relaxing [ri'læksɪŋ] = taking it easy.
 reproach [ri'praʊtʃ] = blame.
 research [ri'sɜːtʃ] = study to discover new facts.
 resume [ri'zjuːm] = to take up again (*noun*, resumption [ri'zʌmpʃən]).
 resentful [ri'zentfʊl] = nursing a sense of wrong.
 resort (in the last) [ri'zɔːt] = when everything else has failed.
 retain [ri'teɪn] = keep.
 rôle [roul] = part in a play.
 rollicking ['rɒlɪkɪŋ] = gay, jolly.
 row [rau] = quarrel.
 rueful ['ruːfʊl] = expressing regret and disappointment.
 saturate ['sætʃʊreɪt] = soak.
 scamper ['skæmpə] = run quickly and lightly.
 scandal ['skændl] = unkind talk injuring a person's good name.
 self-indulgence ['self ɪn'dʌldʒəns] = giving undue satisfaction to one's
 appetites and desires.
 session ['seʃən] = sitting.
 shabby ['ʃæbi] = old and worn.
 shift (drink) = swallow, literally "move" (*slang*).
 shrug [ʃrʌɡ] = a slight lifting up of the shoulders to show doubt,
 hesitation, etc.
 shuffle ['ʃʌfl] = avoid in a cowardly way.
 sinister ['sɪnɪstə] = evil, suspicious.
 siren ['saɪərən] = motor horn.
 slack [slæk] = go lazily.
 slam [slæm] = bang.
 snap [snæp] = break.
 snatch [snætʃ] = seize eagerly.
 snub [snʌb] = to check or put down a person by a sharp scornful re-
 mark or by a show of indifference.
 snuffle ['snʌfl] = breathe thickly through the nose.
 sofa ['soufə] = long cushioned seat with high back and ends.
 spatially ['speɪʃəli] = in space.
 speculatively ['spekjʊlətɪvli] = thoughtfully.
 spell [spel] = magic power binding a person.

GLOSSARY

- spherical [ˈsferɪkl] = concerned with a sphere (i.e. ball).
spiral [ˈspaɪərl] = a movement going round and round and gradually rising.
startle [ˈstɔɪtl] = causes a shock of surprise or fear.
sturdy [ˈstɜːdi] = strong, brave, bold.
suicide [ˈsjuaɪd] = man who kills himself.
sulkily [ˈsʌlkɪli] = silently bad-tempered.
superficial [sjuːpəˈfɪʃəl] = on the surface.
swop [swɒp] = exchange (*colloquial*).
synchronize [ˈsɪŋkrənaɪz] = work exactly together.
- taken aback [ˈteɪkn əˈbæk] = surprised, rather unpleasantly.
technique [ˈteknɪk] = way of doing something expertly in art, etc.
tense [tens] = strained.
tentatively [ˈtentətɪvli] = trying to get information.
tickle [ˈtɪkl] = amuse.
tick [tɪk] = the sound made by a clock or watch.
tick over [ˈtɪk ˈoʊvə] = work quietly (an expression from motoring).
torment [ˈtɔːment] = pain.
torture [ˈtɔɪtʃə] = intense pain.
treadmill [ˈtredmɪl] = wheel turned by men treading on steps fixed on to it.
triangle [ˈtraɪəŋgl] = a figure in geometry whose sides are three straight lines.
trigger [ˈtrɪɡə] = part of a gun that is pulled to fire it.
type [taɪp] = kind.
- unpretentious [ʌnpriˈtenʃəs] = not pretending to be grand.
uprush [ˈʌprʌʃ] = a rising, a rushing up.
- verify [ˈverɪfaɪ] = prove true.
vex [veks] = annoy.
- wan [wɒn] = pale.
wench [wentʃ] = girl, woman (*dialect or archaic*).
whisky [ˈwɪski] = spirit made from barley.
wistfulness [ˈwɪstfʊlnɪs] = gentle sadness.

